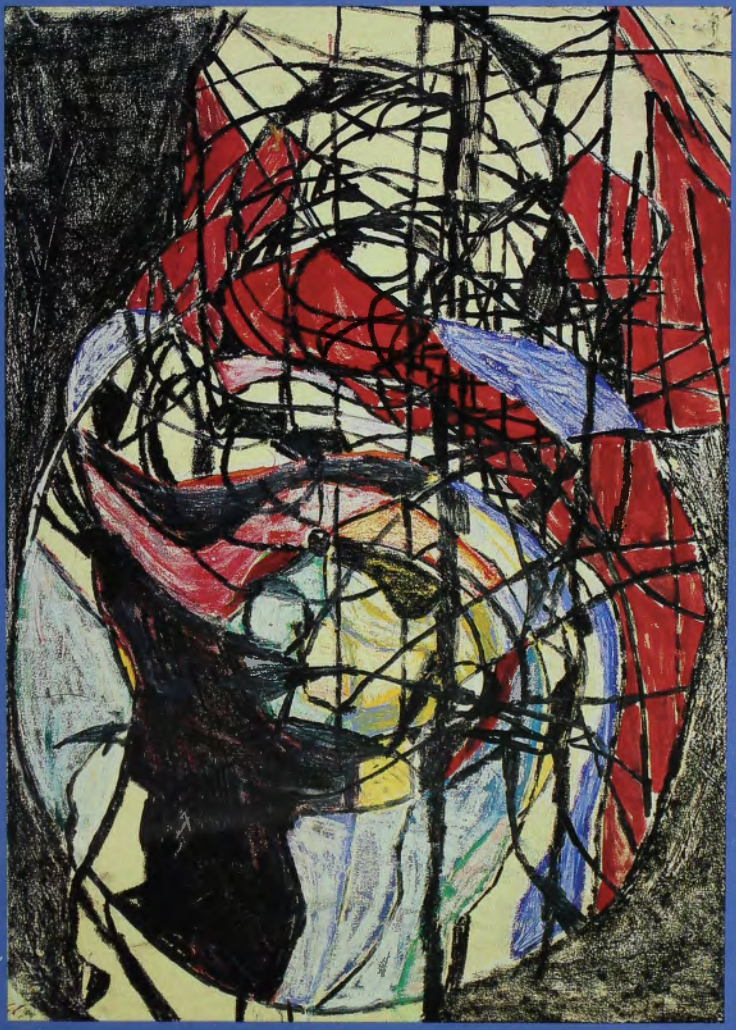
Sulfur 42



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SPRING 1998

A LITERARY BI-ANNUAL OF THE WHOLE ART

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COVER: TERRY WINTERS: Flows Correlated to a Surface, 1996; Ink, oil & acrylic on paper; 105.7 x 75.6 cm.

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GERRIT LANSING

DEAD MAN BLUES

(To be uttered very slowly)

Do you know you energize me so
easy, no, being dead, to know,
ready or not I'm coming any way
(you're not dead you're hiding, no)
katabasis a way to go. . .

Despite fatigue and foliage fall
extends a grace of quietude
reclaims and constellates
your death to wring from me the wrongest cry,
kelson of transmembered diamond night.

Derivative of long song, this
everts a passion past
relief, some die expecting it, a death,
you did not, October morn so red,
knowing at lost last minute only last of life.

MICHAEL IVES

TWO POEMS

EMPIRE

after J.M. Coetzee

At the head of a midrib flume
between heavily veined shoulders
where rainwater beads
huge, in queues of clear ovate knobs
advancing at uneven intervals,
a single droplet waxing
till it can no longer
resist the gradient and
peels off from its wedging,
growing like a crowd
as it overtakes
its lower neighbors
and at the leaf tip,
with reluctance and
growing larger still,
plunges and breaks into multitudes
over the iliac crest,
some of these arrivistes trickling
down buttock-ward
into a mash of fern and broadleaf,
others recollecting themselves
in fresh congress
along the circuitry
of my pubic whorls,
finding their liquid way
into the loose ripple of sheen laid

along the afterwake
as I comb slowly
again and again, lovingly
I must add,
the slick rondure
of your freshly detached head,
these droplets of water
suffering their final
disintegrative communion
as they pass out of reluctance
into general glistening.

SPEM IN ALIUM

wreckyear the dry wind the turgor gone all that you cherish

darkening waterlessness bent over its one hand its eyes turned in against Hope in the corner splashes in the petroleum flowerets in ruined buildings the fluorocarbons and blood-jazz aquarelles coiling in lymph between whirling blades she

murmurs in autistic repetition the revealed edge the creche of words in her venom sack her eyes, tell

her eyes the empty orbits the iris of Hope collapsed like a tissue against bramble growing

through a bramble growing out where once the eyes of Hope a dog in chains its gnashing teeth out of all proportion to the rest of it harrowing the earth below the thorn these

teeth this shuddering muscle and fur in chains to the bleached horizon out of her orbits two inextricable beams of chain and

a trawl of scars down her cheeks it spells the darkening and the bombs the secret writing of grimaces it flickers along the scarred hollows in time to

to the ting and snap of the chain the whipping feral clumps dragged out of her brambled orbits enchained hounds hauled out of the skull of Hope cornered and murmuring and freaked over with knotted shakes of saliva the secret writing

the revealed edge the promise to raze tomorrow with fire all that I cherish I merge with the bullet-headed future passions the dark tailings of reminiscence to bring this shellgame of sacred previsions the gun sees when you pick it up awakening it to an end

of life was hopelessly strewn it gathers in the bullet will bring the shall-it-be game shell comes to a complete

stop all the gannet-winged maps to the wilder parts to the gethsemani of scars across the hopecheek for the forked warning goes as it kevels and if I fall promise to

bring it to raze it tomorrow with fire all that I cherish it goes as it kevels it goes

over the darkening the cattle of all innocence I prayed and was reshackled to the darkening parts the whirling blades out in the interknitted passions the dark tailings the reminiscence now that it begins to rain for the last time the cattle of all innocence driven into a grove of whirling blades out in the interknitting in the final rain and the bombs the tailings we coupled near on broken glass eyeless Hope and I for the last time finish on then the old darkening march of reminiscences cattle of all memory driven into a grove and riven the untabulated bitten into I pray as it goes all the untabulated life

I am darkening I am sleeked over with darkening my eyes rain for the last time

NORMA COLE

from SPINOZA IN HER YOUTH

*

One lived within the portrait of the other, an intimate
brace, thus time's contraction (shaping). One awoke in the
dream in the dark, traces of objects on the surface, and
reference and frailty. One's interest in birds and dogs,
discomfort remembering the toys, adjacency with
[randomness as
reference, not knowing how to end things, not ending.

*

or the problem of recognition
Her dress and start now. To dress and sit down. Someone
flew up.
What is this book, smiling? Kicked the wall, then gave her
the flowers, poppies and daisies.
'd be back at 8, a hole in the wall behind the speaker.

*

dropped into a circle, or landed.
To be continued as conventions you can fall from, a
[permanent
quality. -um, -a.
gratia, grace, favor shown to another, goodwill, kindness
regard
startled, because of the shadows. Read more slowly in the
street, says Médor, in the heat. Look at what we've spent
already, think of your dead comrades.

*

(further notes on thought and vision)
In the frailty of
objects (think of
the other as burnished
divine) called buster
or lining or buffer
beside the cells that
make it play
the Artifact is
where you find it
a product of experiment
it regulates the duck
as filtered caress as
thresholds are set flying
and lying in the same
picture, no violence
no peaches, plums
fruit, onions simply
paper bewildered agate
skin of the day before
extending towards the
sound, resistance eats
a nodal point, silence
recommends reading

*

putsch and *fib* an intimate brace. Her red coat
seen from across the street, birds and dogs. We spotted her
later in the coffee joint deep in conversation with a trick
bag
reproaching stone: do I generalize? only notice the
demarcation line interrogating its own degraded
what you don't want "around"
the coils fall, thus time's
contraction
Things lying around. Procedures for using sound.

*

"Didn't make the rate" quota
she meant
"100 pieces *botched"*
the city of the
could you say heart?
seduction of the negative or
the dead track you, perfect
food for an invading army
"food of the strong people"
Dear Pesto Cheeser
These emblems don't
mean (what they say) he has
never placed a veil across
that doorway
and her lover

*

Today I went to visit the
ancient world, a world
of glass constructed once
then unconstructed, it
bypassed quality, so I came
home and read music what
a woman carries a tune for
instance decentralization
is centrally planned and
can be revoked at any time
it's noon. The moon
is out, I'll meet you
by the pyramid

for Régis Bonvicino

*

Mount Rubbish where the light must make its way through
[fire
Let's make this page into an apartment, an enlightenment

structure like being inside someone's skull. Over to the
right there's a red car. Together they had planted that tree
I enjoy to see you notice
They called it The Colonnade although there were no
[columns
visible

*

A loose and open weave, heavy ink and such, tech grey—was
clear
Al: nothing was wood
Go: nothing was heard
made of parts
this is, this was devoted to the pearls for eyes and all that
when to laugh, the instructor practices, call her

*

GUSTAF SOBIN

CALLED IT SPACE

. . .like the opening and
closing of
clouds, those volutes, those
vaporous immensities: what, wedged within our own,
swollen

mirrors, we'd pried, teased, then, finally,
released into so
many all-
en-
veloping masses. roll, that it
billow; pierce, that it

burst, for this, this only is
depth, dimension, the
sheer

susceptibility of each, elastic, still expanding
emanation. no, it wasn't
walls, rooms, cities we'd inhabited but,
turgid, the air, that
very

instant, we'd tooled through our very teeth, the
nimbi pumped, pulsatile, out of
each

lacquered muscle. we, who'd spoken, once, of
solids, who'd invested in

structure, only thrived, finally, at the
very heart
of

these hollow
expanses. slick
in the very midst of so much

luminous vacuity, had knotted convulsive, hadn't
we; hoarded, against our
gathering
spasms, those heavens, those
high, heightened, meticulously scrolled

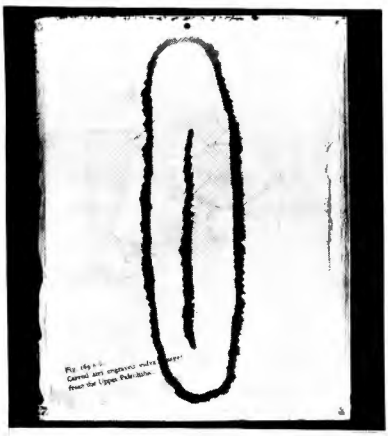
decors. rise then, and
plummet. for we'd only happen, here, in our own,
self-
induced elaborations. only
exult, finally, all

foam and crystals, in this, the
liminal
landscapes of the all-surrounding *isn't.*

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN

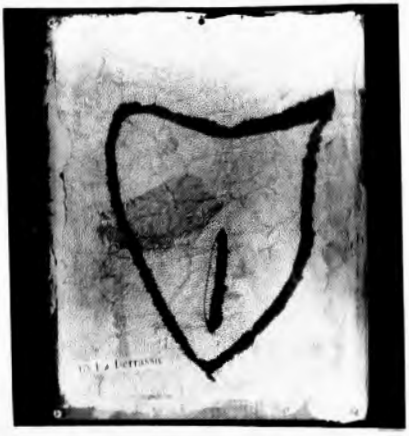
VULVA'S SCHOOL

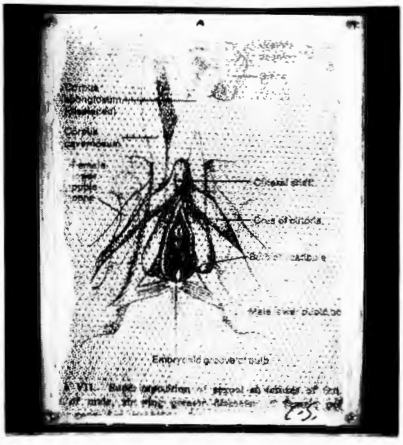
A) Vulva goes to school and discovers she doesn't exist. . .
Vulva goes to church and discovers she is obscene. . .



Vulva deciphers Lacan and Baudrillard and discovers she is only a sign, a signification of the void, of absence, of what is not male. . . (she is given a pen for taking notes. . .)

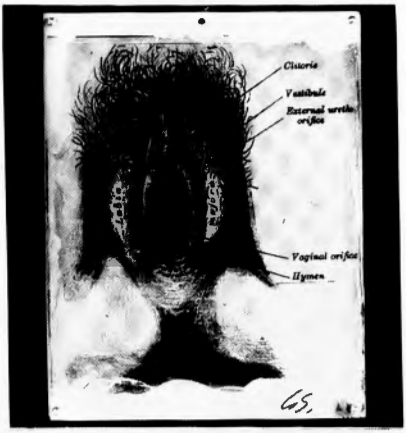
Vulva decodes feminist constructivist semiotics and realizes she has no authentic feelings at all; even her erotic sensations are constructed by patriarchal projections, impositions, and conditioning. . . (B





Vulva reads biology and understands she is an amalgam of proteins and oxytocin hormones which govern all her desires. . .

C) Vulva studies Freud and realizes she will have to transfer clitoral orgasm to her vagina. . .

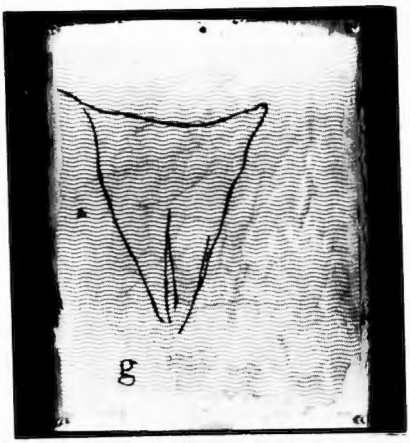


Vulva reads Masters and Johnson and understands her vaginal orgasms have not been measured by any instrumentality and that she should only experience clitoral orgasms. . .

Vulva reads *Off Our Backs* and explores tribalism; then she longs for the other gender's scratching two-day beard, his large hands and insistent cock. . . (D

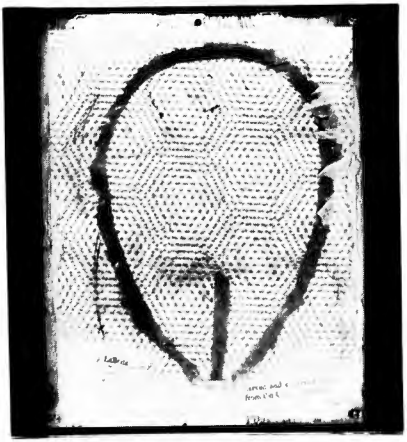
Vulva reads Gramsci and Marx to examine the privileges of her cultural conditions. . .

E) Vulva interprets essentialist feminist texts and paints her face with her menstrual blood, howling when the moon is full. . .



Vulva recognizes her symbols and names on graffiti under the railroad trestle: slit, snatch, enchilada, beaver, muff, coozie, fish and finger pie. . .

Vulva strips naked, fills her mouth and cunt with paint brushes, and runs into the Cedar Bar at midnight to frighten the ghosts of De Kooning, Pollack, Kline. . . (F



Vulva learns to analyze politics by asking "Is this good for Vulva?"

Carolee Schneemann '93-'96
"Vulva's School"

Accreditations
A)
Aphrodite on Shell. Greece 3rd Century, B.C.E. *The Scallop: Studies of a Shell.* Page 38. ed. Ian Cox. "Shell" tranport Co. Ltd. London 1957.

Childhood drawing by C. S. age 4½. Crayon on memo pad.

Vulva images from Upper Paleolithic. *The Roots of Civilization.* Page 297. Marshack, Alexander. McGraw-Hill. c. 1972.

Self-shot. C. S. 1995.

B)
Scale with bananas. Berlin newspaper. 1992.

Vulva detail from "Interior Scroll—The Cave" 1993 performance and video tape (C.S. and Maria Beatty) (still: Melissa Moreton)

Vulva images from Upper Paleolithic. *The Roots of Civilization.* Page 297. Marshack, Alexander. McGraw-Hill. c. 1972.

Superimposition of sexual structures. *The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality.* Page 158. Sherfey, May Jane M.D. Random House. 1972.

C)
Sages worshiping the Yoni. 12th Century Bas-relief, stone Chansatti Temple, Madye Predestin India. *The Once and Future Goddess.* Page 18. Gadon, Elinor W. Harper & Row. 1989.

Madonna del Parto. Piero della Francesca. 1460 (?). Pinacoteca Comunale, Sansepolcro, Italy.

Vulva images from Upper Paleolithic. *The Roots of Civilization.* Page 297. Marshack, Alexander. McGraw-Hill. c. 1972.

"Back to Earth, workers prepare to rebury some 500 people whose grave at Hardin, MO were uprooted by last summer's Missouri River floods." Chicago Tribune. 12 November 1993.

D)

Figure 1193. *Anatomy of the Human Body.* Page 1275. Gray, Henry F.R.S. Lea and Febiger c. 1924.

Photograph of C. S. at 7½ months old. Photo cut and self-censored at age 10-11; restored 1995.

Vulva images from Upper Paleolithic. *The Roots of Civilization.* Page 297. Marshack, Alexander. McGraw-Hill. c. 1972.

Figure 1193. *Anatomy of the Human Body.* Page 1275. Gray, Henry F.R.S. Lea and Febiger c. 1924.

E)

"Saw Over Want," C. S. (Self-shot: image from grid of 36 color photographs) 1982.

Crocodile Head. Decorative Motif—Restaurant, W. 23rd Street, NYC. 1995.

Vulva images from Upper Paleolithic. *The Roots of Civilization.* Page 297. Marshack, Alexander. McGraw-Hill. c. 1972.

SheeLagh-Na-Gig. County Clare, Eire. *Primitive Erotic Art.* Plate 28. Rawson, Phillip. G.P. Putnams, NY c. 1973.

F)

Re-configured Medusa head by C.S. Zolla, Elemore. *The Androgyne.* Page 84. Thames & Hudson, London. c. 1981.

Japanese Yoni in stone. *Phallic Worship.* Figure 36. Page 178-9. George Ryley Scott. Luxor Press Ltd. London 1966.

Vulva images from Upper Paleolithic. *The Roots of Civilization.* Page 297. Marshack, Alexander. McGraw-Hill. c. 1972.

Sea Mother. Wooden Carving. Kwakiutl, northwest coast N. America. *Primitive Erotic Art.* Plate 67. Rawson, Phillip. G.P. Putnams, NY c. 1973.

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BARBARA MACLEOD

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BLOOD SACRIFICE

Introduction

The motif of blood sacrifice is widely recurrent in the literature of anthropology and comparative religion; it pervades the Old Testament and is the linchpin of the New, and it has resurfaced in both underground mythology and in actual practice in American society in recent years.

This study will attempt to unearth some of the roots of this compelling and disturbing practice in the context of a comparison between Judeo-Christian sacrificial rites and those of two preconquest Mesoamerican cultures: the Maya and the Aztec. It is predicated on the assumption that such roots exist cross-culturally. It will address the psychological directives underlying the sacrificial motif, and will undertake to place twentieth-century "civilized" man squarely in its midst.

I have chosen to compare the Judeo-Christian tradition with that of Mesoamerica precisely because the horrific aspects of Mesoamerican sacrifice have been provided in rich and endless detail. Furthermore, Mesoamerican religion and cosmology are topics which ceaselessly flank my own specialization in Mayan languages and hieroglyphic writing. Those who study these cultures often find that there comes an hour of reckoning with this dark thread so central to the ancient cultures we have chosen to examine. My own reckoning led me into Jungian analysis, and it was my encounter with the unconscious, embroidered with Mesoamerican images, which catalyzed my interest in the psychological aspects of sacrifice.

I look upon the Jungian model not as sacrosanct but rather as explanatory. My explorations using Jungian roadmaps have led me to a deep appreciation of the individual's need for culture—need for a system which mediates treacherous raw experience. The Jungian system attempts to wrestle with far more than Western psychic reality, and its attention to so-called primitive societies has drawn chronic

criticism, some quite justified, within the field of anthropology. But the concept of the collective unconscious is attractive to anyone seeking evidence of our universal humanness, and it does explain such phenomena as the spontaneous appearance of classical mythological themes in the dreams of persons unexposed to that literature. More controversial is whether it explains strikingly similar cultural complexes in societies thought to have no shared genesis. The body of Jungian literature is ample, and its prize pearls include in great measure the works of Jung himself. On the topic of blood sacrifice, the Jungian literature is vast and rich with comparative historical and mythological material. As with any garden, it needs weeding.

Some Rules of Jungian Discourse

Jungian psychology shares with Freudian psychology an analytic approach best represented in the four-way dialogue between analyst and analysand (and between Other and Other, or Animus and Anima) in a therapeutic context designed to bring forth and help the analysand integrate unconscious material. The dialogue goes on for years. A point of formal closure may be reached, but the process continues through one's lifetime. A basic premise is the existence of the unconscious. By definition, it is inscrutable; in the Freudian view, elucidated best by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), the unconscious is a repository of repressed personal material, accessible through dreams. The unconscious also contains certain instinctual predispositions; these in turn give rise to the Oedipus complex and its various resolutions and non-resolutions. The Jungian view of the unconscious also holds it to be inaccessible directly. In contrast with Freud, however, Jung posited that it has both personal and transpersonal layers, the latter being the deeper. The personal unconscious is made up of complexes (formerly conscious forgotten and repressed material), while the transpersonal (or collective) unconscious contains archetypes (Jung, 1959:42). These are "primordial images" whose presence is independent of personal experience, and which in ur-form have never been conscious.

> "I have chosen the term collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and

thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us."
—C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* 1959:3

But archetypes bind themselves to personal experience, and wear the masks of familiar images. An inventory of common archetypes appearing in dreams, fantasy, scripture, folktales, and works of literature and mythology includes the Shadow/Trickster, Anima and Animus (the opposite sex personifications of the chthonic soul), the Earth (or Great) Mother, the Son-Lover (the beautiful and edible consort of the Great Mother), the Divine Father, the Puer Aeternus, the Spirit (the ally who pops up in moments of crisis), and the Self (union, resolution, oneness, God), as well as themes such as the ladder into heaven, the night sea journey, the dragon's treasure hoard, heroic rescue, metamorphosis, and sacrifice. The list (much longer than this) has never been formally closed.

Jung (1959:79) hastens to point out that "archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree". Content is acquired as the archetype moves into the field of consciousness, where it wraps itself in the cloth of personal experience. Jung uses the metaphor of the axial system of a crystal, which determines the patterns of molecular bonding, vs. the palpable crystal itself.

With respect to the ego, or the I with whom the individual identifies, the collective unconscious has devouring potential. Defenses are thrown up from infancy on to hold the collective at bay. Traumatic experiences are relegated to the personal unconscious, but they have a hotline to the devouring collective. The defenses themselves—particularly dysfunctional, anachronistic ones—are also repressed into the personal unconscious. In the Jungian view, social and religious systems exist primarily to filter and mediate the archetypes; they provide a medium in which the ego can form and grow. But they, too, may become dysfunctional and anachronistic, and in the individuation process (a separation by the individual from the mainstream traditionally associated with the second half of life, and initiated by the "mid-life crisis") a mature adult might divest him/herself of burdensome traditions and dogma, but also of the protection these provide. Artists are regarded as vulnerable at all times to being overrun by the archetypes, since creative energy derives from proximity to the unconscious, and artists initiate the individuation process much earlier. Psychotics are thought to be more or less chronically overwhelmed, or perched on the edge of the abyss. Archetypes channel libido and exert fascination;

they can seduce, enthrall, and ensnare the ego, generating unfounded projections of themselves onto the world.

Jung (1956) regarded *libido* to be of a more generalized nature than did Freud (1953)—i.e. it is not specifically sexual, although it is bound to sexuality, as it is bound to all complexes. He spoke of it as "creative and procreative", possessing "an intuitive faculty, a strange power to `smell the right place', almost as if it were a live creature with an independent life of its own". It is "a force of nature, good and bad at once, or morally neutral" (Jung, 1956:125). It is an "energy-value which is able to communicate itself to any field of activity whatsoever, be it power, hunger, hatred, sexuality, religion, without ever being itself a specific instinct" (ibid.:137).

I have mentioned the "archetype of sacrifice". This motif, in addition to its representation in many religious systems, frequently appears as a dream image in Western cultures; therein it is associated by Jungians with life crises and phases of transformation, such as the onset of mid-life and the individuation process. Speaking of the sacrificial motif in dreams, Jung says:

> "If, however, it is a question of a fundamental change of personality or of one's general attitude,. . .then mythological motifs appear, sometimes borrowed, sometimes spontaneously produced, which do not fail to suggest the most intense suffering, even at a time when the conscious mind is not aware of anything painful, except perhaps a vague sense of oppression or uneasiness. It is true that the onset of conscious suffering is not as a rule very long delayed. If the inner transformation enters more or less completely into consciousness, it becomes one of the most vivid and most decisive experiences a man can have of his individual fate. The saying *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—there is no Salvation outside the Church—is no doubt a profound truth; but the grace of God, it seems to me, is profounder still".
>
> —C.G. Jung, *Transformation Symbolism in the Mass*:1958:224)

Some Anthropological Views on the Meaning of Sacrifice

Anthropologists have been addressing the motives for blood sacrifice for at least as long as the psychoanalysts, and there has always been some degree of cross-fertilization. Freud's (1950) "primal horde"

hypothesis, in which the origin of sacrifice (particularly the pattern in which the god or totem animal is ritually slain and eaten) is explained in terms of a primal parricide and resultant totemism. This in turn derived from Darwin's (1927:395) thesis that a primal group, in which sons threatened competition with the father for the women and were thus driven out, was historical fact.

The works of Frazer (1923, 1959, 1962), voluminous and of unpredictable reliability, target the recurrent theme of dying/reborn gods of vegetation and ritual regicide in the Near East and Africa. A magical relationship obtains between the chosen victim and the deity, whereby the rebirth of the crops and man's communion with the sacred is assured.

E.B. Tylor (1929) saw sacrifice as a gift made by man to supernatural beings or to ancestors; the purpose was propitiatory, and favors (or at least a reduction of hostility) were hoped for in return. The "gift" idea will be reconsidered later.

Durkheim (1915,1976 reprint) acknowledged the importance of the gift or oblation in sacrificial rites, but attributed more importance to the "mental states which these actions, though vain in themselves, accompany or reawaken" (1976:346). The regenerative thoughts of men, directed toward the gods, are his true gift, and are, in Durkheim's view, the sustenance on which the gods (who have no existence outside man's thought) depend. Human society is nurtured by the regenerative thought of individuals, and shared sacrificial rites serve the community's emotional and spiritual regeneration. We will return to this theme as well.

Robertson Smith (1927) focused on the communal meal as a means of connection between man and a specific (totemic) supernatural. This is more than a simple dialogue, but becomes an identity between the god and the worshippers. The rite is an exchange of blood, one which is expiatory and cleansing as well as unifying. Smith argued that the Semitic tribes were originally totemic, but later instituted human sacrifice in substitution for the totemic animal, whose true nature had been forgotten. We will examine the issue of human and animal sacrifice among the ancient Hebrews.

Hubert and Mauss (1964) consider the victim as a necessary intermediary between the sacrificer and the sacred; direct contact with the sacred is far too dangerous. Therefore the victim, rather than the priest or the group, succumbs to the danger and is destroyed. The result is a spiritual transformation of the ritual community.

Girard (1972) takes issue with all of the above, and offers the "surrogate victim theory" to explain sacrifice and its relation to violence in human societies. This "surrogate" is not the actual victim in a

given rite, but a trope for the underlying scapegoat/decontamination directive, one engendered by some ineffable and spontaneous act of group violence at the dawn of our species' evolution. The repercussions affect us still, and repeatedly create a "sacrificial crisis" which can only be resolved through the ritual slaying of a human victim selected by chance; as the crisis deepens, secular violence increases, approaching a critical mass. Girard's thesis is the only one among these which tackles the issue of secular violence in relation to sacrifice. He also makes the point that no single context-specific analysis will get at the underlying sacrificial directive (violent unanimity)—only the comparative method will work. It is regrettable that he says so little about the heinous primal act itself.

These theories demonstrate is that (1) there is a great diversity of opinion vis-a-vis the primary sacrificial motive, and (2) anthropologists have since the birth of the discipline scanned large bodies of data in a search for universals.

A Synthesis

Jungians are as a rule not much influenced by trends in anthropology. Given a choice of etiologies for the many variants of blood sacrifice in the ancient Near East, an orthodox Jungian might well point to the collective unconscious in favor of diffusion between contiguous cultures, or as a compromise suggest that the former paved the way for the latter. In the case of similarities between the sacrificial complexes of the Judeo-Christian tradition and ancient Mesoamerica, diffusion appears far less likely; nonetheless the occasional investigator dares to posit it. A fair alternative is the possibility that the ancient oral tradition was far more capacious, precise, and durable than modern man can appreciate, having largely lost it, and that the common origin of peoples of both the Old World and the New is sufficient to account for certain otherwise unexplained cultural similarities. The Jungian might then add that the collective unconscious greatly enhances the carrying capacity of the oral tradition.

The psychological approach to the motif of sacrifice finds fertile ground in our violence-ridden, initiation-starved, putatively Christian modern American society. In seeking common ground between rites and beliefs of the Old World and the New, I admit that I have been attempting to map some of the shakier ground of my own being, shaped by the Old (raised as an atheist in a hypocritical Christian milieu) and reshaped by the New (as a Maya scholar and long-term resident of Central America and an empirical investigator of shamanic

reality). The resonance that I find here between Old World and New may be a product of my own solipsism, or it may really be out there.

The Psychology of Blood Sacrifice: Who Cares?

Many factors in human social evolution have over the centuries served to "civilize" what could be viewed as an eternal and insatiable archetype, although there have been significant lapses in the civilizing process. Christianity is a notable example of a movement toward spiritualization—an investment of collective libido in a symbol (crucifix) rather than the flesh (reenactments of the crucifixion). It is not the only such movement, and its failures have counterbalanced its successes.

I have called the sacrificial motif eternal and insatiable. Do I mean to suggest that deep within the collective, civilized, Western psyche lurks a potential monster? Perhaps so. Modern Americans face essentially the same struggle that our forebears faced: do we concretize this archetype, or do we spiritualize it? The response cannot come from reason alone; spiritualizing it has to *work*. On the other hand, the choice to concretize may lead to chaos.

There is a third option, that of denial. This option is offered not just as a rhetorical "straw man", for the advent of humanistic science has for many Westerners rendered anachronistic the notions of original sin, afterlife, of reciprocity between man and gods, of deities demanding their due. These are all components of the sacrificial constellation, if we take that constellation to include all the motives and themes cited above. But science has not rid modern man of the archetypal bogeyman, who is no less dangerous for not being "out there". Indeed, for many Jungians, the only real drama is the inner one, set on the stage of the individual psyche. The rest is projection.

The struggle to spiritualize may take place beneath the protective wing of an established religion whose prophets have already charted the way; a deep psychological need of the individual may be met by the religious institution which can filter and channel the raw power of archetypes. But for many individuating people in Western society, this medicine no longer has efficacy. We must seek other options and non-mainstream traditions; we must become heroes in our own myth, engage the dragon in uncharted waters. This is of course one of the objectives of the analyst-analysand dialogue. To negotiate successfully with the archetype of sacrifice the individual must consecrate his/her own psychic wounds, wounds which are hidden from oneself and from others, and which have no voice which approximates the

eloquence of a broken leg. And s/he must make a burnt offering of the aspects of ego which no longer serve personal growth, which thrive on fear and alienation. Reason alone will not lead to that high altar.

Where might Salem, My Lai, Matamoros or Heaven's Gate fit in our cultural tapestry? What about America's thirst for gratuitous violence, as evidenced by the endless parade of corpses and gore across our TV and movie screens? The entertainment industry only reflects our desire. America desires protagonists who never evolve, plots without redeeming spiritual protein, and titillating gore, all of which bespeaks a cultural regression into the belly of the dragon, and on the collective level, we hardly seem to notice, or to care. Jim Jones, who in Guyana led his people forthrightly and dramatically into the belly of the dragon, was fond of the quote "he who does not understand history is doomed to repeat it". We might rephrase that as "s/he who does not negotiate with the archetype is doomed to be eaten by it". And negotiation is no guarantee against being eaten anyway.

If René Girard is correct, modern Western society is in the throes of a "sacrificial crisis", made all the more acute by the denial we practice with respect to the archetypes (even though Girard sees no need for the concept in his evolutionary scheme), and the disappearance of substantive initiatory rites in favor of disposable commitments. But is his "solution" the appropriate one? Hardly. And yet when chance (or Providence—something other than the local establishment) selects a doomed hero for us, as did the assassinations of Martin Luther King, John Kennedy, and John Lennon, a certain resolution and unity does prevail for a time.

So indeed, there is a bogeyman, or perhaps she is the bogey side of the Great Mother, who in her classical manifestations may be a toothsome crone as well as maiden and mother. In any exegesis of sacrifice, it is important to consider the borderland it shares with the archetypes of the Great Mother, and the vengeful, tyrannical aspect of the Divine Father.

Sacrifice: Definitions and Preliminary Typology

A restricted definition of sacrifice, a word meaning "to consecrate", must include a ritual context, a ritual objective, and a relationship of identity between all participants—priest, victim, and onlookers. It must involve a *loss* which is also a *gift,* recalling Tylor's hypothesis. The role of the victim is to connect the community with the supernatural world; Hubert and Mauss state that this cannot be achieved directly, but rather requires the victim as intermediary. Smith stresses the role of commun-

ion (eating the flesh of the offering, who is identified with the god) in this connection. Frazer regards the process as a magical identification between victim and deity. A scapegoat motive may be present, either consciously or unconsciously (recalling, for example, the Christian avowal of Jesus' taking on the sins of the world in order to relieve humanity of them). This process of losing/giving/communing/purging results in a profound psychological catharsis for all participants. The Jungian focus on the dynamics of the individual psyche, which we will later examine in more detail, brings to the foreground the psychological role of sacrifice as both motif and practice. As we will see, events in the profane world may later constellate the archetype, and create ritual, or religion, retroactively. The state of identification is numinous in any case.

In its concrete manifestations in myth and history, ritual blood sacrifice varies considerably. It may serve any of several acknowledged purposes: propitiation, atonement, thanksgiving, or communion. Among the common offerings are first fruits, first fowl, first lambs or bullocks, firstborn sons, war prisoners, slaves, retired kings, and solicited children. Primacy, innocence, and physical perfection are often the desired attributes. This finds consistency with the myths of beautiful and narcissistic dying savior gods of vegetation of the ancient Near East, who return, eternally, into the arms of the Great Mother (Frazer, 1959,1962; Jung, 1956; Campbell, 1988:91-121).

There is a middle-ground manifestation of blood sacrifice, one which can channel considerable libido without usurping the will of another living being. This is the practice of self-mortification, of offering one's own flesh and/or blood. Christianity has always made allowances for those who choose this path. Many Native North American peoples practiced self-mortification, or have returned to it in recent times. The ancient Mayas and Aztecs practiced it as well; they also did this in conjunction with the sacrifice of captives. The latter is a specific case of ritual creating identity between the sacrificing priest and the victim.

The threads of blood sacrifice recede far into time, and they wind through the cultural cloth of peoples on every habitable continent. Archaeological evidence from both the Old World and the New demonstrates head or skull cults thousands of years before present. In the Old World, some of this evidence dates as far back as 20,000 B.C., while in the New World it is more recent—4,000 B.C. or so. Many scholars of comparative religion see the shift from the nomadic hunter-gatherer lifeway to that of sedentary agriculture as a critical watershed on many ritual levels. It is certainly so in this case. The dependence upon the elements, the recognition of numinosity in the earth and in

plant life, which is seen empirically to die and be reborn, led most early planting cultures in the same direction. It is theorized that the staple crop was deified as a god, one who died at the harvest and who was reborn in the spring. The myths of the youthful gods of vegetation of the ancient Near East all reflect the embrace between the son-lover and the Great Mother: Tammuz of Babylonia, Osiris of Egypt, Dionysus of Greece. The Maya Maize God fits this pattern exactly.

The Old World gods of vegetation are often viewed as forerunners of Christ, templates from which his myth evolved, or from which his history sprang, depending on one's point of view (Jung, 1956: Ch.5). In myth after myth, these beautiful young gods are betrayed, slain, buried, and reborn: they become kings of the Otherworld, illumined beings who light the way through the door beyond death into eternal life. Their death is interpreted as a sacrifice made so that man might find that door. It has been inferred that many of their cults practiced reenactment in bloody rites, but the view that vegetal deities were central to the documented Near East human sacrificial complex has been questioned by Green (1975:201-203); while he asserts that human sacrifice was widespread, he associates it with foundation rituals, rites of propitiation and expiation, and the dispatching of attendants to the Otherworld in royal funerary rites.

I would now like to narrow the focus to two great religious traditions, one from the Old World, and one from the New. The Judeo-Christian tradition permeates our culture; its sacrificial themes are familiar, at least skeletally, to most of us. The Mesoamerican "culture area" shares many features across a wide range of language families and geography. In attempting to illuminate the stage on which its sacrificial dramas were enacted, I will consider some myths, ceremonies and directives of the Aztec and Maya cultures. We will see very quickly that there is common ground.

Judeo-Christian Blood Sacrifice: An Origin Myth

After the creation of the First Parents in the unity that was Eden, Eve was beguiled by a snake; she in turn beguiled Adam, and they sampled the apple of oppositions (Genesis 3). Interestingly, the Ouroboros, as elucidated by Erich Neumann (1954:5-38), is often represented as a snake which swallows its tail. Yet in the Eden story a snake precipitates the fall out of unity into division—an inversion of the ouroboric serpent motif. Pitt-Rivers (1977:127), citing Frazer's *Folklore in the Old Testament,* notes with reservations the latter's interpretation of the serpent as symbolic of immortality (the archetype of metamorphosis, shedding

the skin, is linked to immortality), as well as his observation that the Eden story involves an inversion: a deception which leaves man mortal and the serpent immortal.

The fundamental splits in Eden were these: man vs. God, man vs. woman, man vs. beasts. The apple is the fruit of a Tree of Death, better known as the "tree of knowledge of good and evil". It stands in a polar relation to the Tree of Life, whose fruit grants immortality (Gen. 3: 22-23). Anyone who eats of both becomes "as a god" and immortal, and that competition the Father God will not abide.

Christian scripture explains the crucifixion of Christ as the atonement for this sin of Adam (Romans 5), and therein another opposition is established, one with a resolution implicit in the sacrificial act. The serpent, who seduced woman, will now be bruised upon the head by the foot of Mary, the mother of Christ (implied in Gen. 3:15), who in the loss of her son finds redemption for Eve. Once again sacrifice leads to reconciliation.

But meanwhile, back in the garden, the First Parents are assailed by yet more oppositions (Gen. 3,4). Innocence has soured to shame, and the couple who once dwelled inside are now outcasts abroad in a world filled with death. They make the best of it, raise two sons. One, Cain, is a planter; the other, Abel, is a herder. This must reflect an early schism based on modes of subsistence; here the herder is clearly favored. We are told that Cain is a snivelling ne'er-do-well, but this fact seems secondary to the message underlying the brother-murder: sacrificial lambs please Yahweh and sacrificial veggies do not. The envious Cain slays his brother, an act which in spite of its break from ritual, its lack of cultivated identification between the doer and the done-to, has strong sacrificial overtones. The crucifixion was a similarly secular event—the punishment of an alleged criminal. Abel, the favored of God with the favored lifeway, became the first martyr. The same story provides the charter for animal sacrifice.

It may be useful to pause for a moment and interject a few observations by Pitt-Rivers on the issue of the historicity of Genesis, a subject addressed in *The Fate of Shechem* (1977): he finds commonality between Genesis and the Quiche Maya *Popol Vuh* (to which we will later refer) in terms of their internal development from pure myth to historicized myth. In each case, the early chapters of a single tale are the most removed from reality as we understand it, but there is a progression toward history. Pitt-Rivers (challenging Leach's [1969] work on the Old Testament in which he submits it, as myth, to a structural analysis), believes the pure myth/historicized myth distinction to be critical, and regards the editing of the Old Testament to have been "a process of sifting and collating of texts and sacred oral

traditions spanning many centuries" (1977:139). Furthermore, he proposes that this ongoing editorial process was at every stage motivated by a need to apply the stamp of mythic charter (the death-knell of pure myth) to contemporary social and political agendas.

Sacrifice was high on the Hebrews' list of chartered procedures. The story of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22) addresses the theme of transition between human and animal sacrifice. From it we might infer that for a time beforehand, both were practiced by the Hebrews (we may recall Smith's formulation that animal sacrifice came first; one wonders about his suggestion that the Hebrews were totemic, however). As the story goes, the long-barren wife of Abraham bears him a son, Isaac. When the boy reaches adolescence God commands Abraham to take Isaac to the mountain and make of him a burnt offering. We see in Yahweh's request that aspect of the Father archetype which demands absolute loyalty in the hierarchy, contrives tests of fealty. Abraham concedes; he takes Isaac to the requisite spot, prepares the altar in the familiar manner. At the last moment, a ram fortuitously appears, its horns tangled in a thicket. Abraham's hand is stayed by an angel, and the ram is sacrificed instead. Whatever the historical truth of any of this, we find here the charter for the substitution of a ram for a firstborn son. Abraham's willingness to commit the awesome act adds numinosity to the substitution, and gives the ram equal value. From the plethora of references to bovine sacrifice in the Old Testament, we can understand the motives for the attribution of numinosity (via mythic charter); what remains uncertain is the historicity of the sacrifice of the firstborn son. Here the deeper layer serves a later agenda; this does not prove that it was historical fact, but one should not let piety dispel the possibility. In the Old Testament and in other ancient sources, the foundations of cities and lineages are often anchored by blood sacrifice, and Abraham is of course the founder of the Hebrews. In Exodus 24 we learn of the importance of blood in sealing pacts and covenants: Moses, as he throws sacrificial blood upon the onlookers, says "behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words". Nowadays, the notion of sealing pacts with blood applies also to pacts with the devil, pacts between Mafiosi and other blood brothers. We find the theme in Huckleberry Finn.

Passages in Numbers (8:17) and Micah (6:7) attest to a claim upon the firstborn of man and beast by Yahweh, and hint strongly at the concrete legitimacy of such offerings. The Genesis account above serves as a disclaimer of sorts, if taken in historical-narrative sequence. Some Old Testament scholars argue that this passage was appended to Genesis during the eighth century, B.C. at a time when child sacrifice

was rampant throughout the region. Admonitions against an act are strong arguments for its existence, and such injunctions, lamenting the tendency of the Israelites to be swayed by the dubious habits of their barbarous neighbors, pepper the scriptures of the period.

There is one straightforward account of child sacrifice—that of Jephthah's daughter, who is not named (Judges 11). Jephthah had vowed that were he victorious in his battle against the Ammonites, he would make a burnt offering of the first living thing to greet him as he returned home. The hand of Providence placed his daughter on the altar. One can only wonder what social agenda, beyond the provision of a paragon of absolute fealty, was served in the preservation of this event by the Old Testament editors in a chapter largely concerned with issues of legitimacy, inheritance, and conquest.

Yet another sacrificial theme emerges in the story of Abraham. Abraham is circumcised as an outward sign of his covenant with God (Gen. 17). This offering of flesh becomes the badge of all males of the covenant. While many neighbors of the Israelites also practiced circumcision, they did it erratically, and not as a sign. Might this not be another substitution—one of circumcision for castration, which myth tells us was practiced upon priests of the Great Mother? The act of circumcision is similarly a substitution for the sacrifice of the son: the part stands for the whole. And it has also been noted by Hyam Maccoby (1982:87-96) that substitutionary circumcision, as a holdover from matriarchal religion, may have been an agreement to give the Mother her modicum of due in a pact which stabilized the patriarchate. Maccoby has suggested that a more authentic account of the origin of circumcision is found in Exodus (4:24-26), in which a murky passage (perhaps deliberately so) reveals that Moses, in a divinely-inspired frenzy, sought to sacrifice his son as an inauguration of his mission, but his wife intervened by circumcising the infant and casting the foreskin at his feet. This satisfied God, and the state of frenzy abated.

Texts from the Old Testament also make repeated reference to "circumcision of the heart" as a metaphor for faithfulness and righteousness. Consider this from Deuteronomy 10:16: "circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked". This is not to say that the inner offering could replace the outer, as was later the case among Christians.

Circumcision was eschewed by Paul again and again, who argued that the covenant was ordained before Abraham performed this act, and that for Christians neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availed (Col. 3:11). Rather, the important things were "faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6), and keeping the commandments.

When we turn to the Maya, we will find grist for yet another mill:

that circumcision is "male menstruation". Roheim (1945:164), who did fieldwork in Australia in 1929, informs us that the Aranda refer to the subincision wound as a vagina; other subincision myths cite the regenerative properties of blood from this wound.

Throughout the Old Testament we find direct references to the sacrifice of livestock and of birds. Here are some passages from Leviticus which specify the antecedents and details of these sacrifices:

> "And if his offering be a goat, then he shall offer it before the Lord.
> And he shall lay his hand upon the head of it, and kill it before the tabernacle of the congregation: and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle the blood thereof upon the altar round about.
> And he shall offer thereof his offering, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards,
> And the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away.
> And the priest shall burn them upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savor: all the fat is the Lord's.
> It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood."
>
> —Leviticus 3:12-17

> "If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance in the holy things of the Lord; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering:
> And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.
> And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity."
>
> —Leviticus 5:15-17

We note that the animal's blood is the property of God, and is to be sprinkled around the altar. This extends to all animals which are eaten under any circumstances: blood is a sacred substance, the essence of life. In Deuteronomy (12:23) we are told that "the blood is the life; thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh". This directive still underlies the rite of kosher meat preparation as well as the separation of meat from dairy products in kosher households. Later Christian texts (Eph. 1: 7, Col. 1:14) echo this equation of blood with life in relation to the redemptive power of the blood of Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses, in one of the interpretations by which they distinguish themselves, view transfused blood as eaten blood.

In contrast with Judaism, Christianity turns its full attention to salvation of the soul. As Maccoby notes, "salvation" is used in the Old Testament in reference only to physical deliverance from some peril. Thus we find in Christianity a marriage between the images of youthful dying saviors of Mesopotamia and that of the father-god of Israel. We have already noted that the Passion of Christ was viewed as an act of rectification, one which, for those who accept Christ, neutralizes the sin of Adam. The willingness of Christ to shoulder this burden serves to poignantly highlight both the human and deity aspects of his psyche. In the garden at Gethsemane, the man asks that the cup pass, but the god accepts it. This vacillation on the edge of eternity helps forge a bond of identity between Christ and his followers; it calls forth compassion in all who hear of it. The same may be said of the communion meal of the Last Supper, which is the prototype of the Mass. The passage in 1 Corinthians provides the well-known lines "this is my body, which is broken for you (speaking of the bread)". "This cup is the new testament in my blood". Joseph Campbell (1988:109) cites the apocryphal text of a hymn sung at the Last Supper whose words specify Christ as the Lord of the Dance who goes half-willingly to his death, dancing on the razor's edge of oppositions, one of which is "I would flee, and I would stay". His scourging and shaming as a criminal, his descent into hell, even his words "my God, why have you forsaken me?" on the cross serve to render absolute his death, absolute the sorrow of his disciples, to leave nothing untransformed during the blackening in the crucible. And the cross on which he is crucified is symbolically a tree—a reprise of the Tree of Death. As Jung observes in his *Symbols of Transformation* (1956:432), there are other sacrificed gods who hang from trees; notable is Odin of the Norse myths (Wotan to the Germanic tribes) who is sacrificed by himself to himself, and who hangs for nine days upon the tree Yggdrasil, the *axis mundi* at the center of the Norse cosmogram. The cross on Calvary may not stand in

the geographic center of the world of ancient times, but it does stand in the doorway between this world and the Otherworld.

The wounding of Christ in his side releases a flow of blood and water, as the gospels inform us. Jung, in his *Transformation Symbolism in the Mass* (1958:220), likens that mixture to a union of spirit and nature, and finds it reflected in the practice of mixing wine with water during the preparation of the chalice in the Mass. Wine equals blood equals spirit. This *commixtio* reaffirms the dual nature of the sacrifice.

We find in the New Testament multiple references (in 1 Peter, Revelation, Ephesians, Colossians) to the power of the blood of Christ; it is the substance through which redemption is possible. In Revelation (7:14), the robes of the elect who come out of great tribulation are made white through washing in the blood of the Lamb. That same blood permits triumph over Satan, triumph over undue attachment to this life. That blood is the seal of the new dispensation, which renders obsolete all need for animal offering; from now on all offerings will be of one's heart to God, figuratively speaking. The crucifixion is the blood sacrifice to end all blood sacrifices. And in large measure, the spread of Christianity accomplished just that, in *ritual* contexts. Nonetheless, a special place in heaven was reserved for martyrs, whose deaths were seen as expiatory on behalf of all believers, and without whom this young religion might well have failed to inspire. But after the conversion of the Romans to Christianity, the defenders of an increasingly intolerant faith put thousands of infidels to the sword, including the strayed sheep of the home flock. This intolerance reached a zenith during the Inquisition, a pogrom which erected and bloodied many iron Trees of Death. It was the repression of the collective Shadow of Christianity which backfired into a holocaust. Nonetheless, the figure of Christ in a multiplicity of sects still has great efficacy as a vehicle for transformation. We shall reconsider the psychic implications of this.

Blood Sacrifice in Mesoamerica: Prologue

As in the case of the Old World, the peoples of native North and Central America were first nomadic hunter-gatherers; archaeological evidence bears this out, and many North American tribes maintained this mode of subsistence until the coming of the white man. Typically, hunter-gatherer societies have at their center the figure of the shaman, who is medical doctor, psychotherapist, myth-bearer, storyteller, arbiter in disputes, and adventurer *par excellence* in the nether regions of the unconscious, the realm of lost souls (Eliade, 1964). By means of trance

or psychotropic drugs or both, the shaman could move through the door between the worlds. Because of his power, which included the power to do harm should he choose, this person was often feared, but he was also vital to the community. He stood in the center of the cosmogram, reading the weather of both worlds, forecasting and prescribing accordingly.

In the move toward sedentarism, which took place in both North and Central America, the role of the shaman expanded to embrace the political role of priest-king. Agriculture is labor-intensive; it requires a chain of command. Sedentarism encourages specialization, and arises mutually with competition and territoriality, which lead to warfare. In the Old World case, scholars have tended to assume that the priest-king no longer had to actually travel to the underworld—he merely had to claim he did, or claim descent from one who did. He still had private audience with the gods, but his social functions were relegated to political decisions, to officiating at ceremonies. In Mesoamerica, the king certainly had priestly and political responsibilities, but in the Maya case it seems likely that the office required sojourns in the Otherworld as well (Schele and Miller, 1986). Archaeological, iconographic, and hieroglyphic evidence points to the pervasive practice of personal bloodletting on the part of the ruler—a rite leading to visionary states in which the ancestors were contacted. There is also some evidence for the use of psychotropic plants.

The Maya Sacrificial Complex in Myth and Ritual

In a Classic Maya hieroglyphic tale of creation (the Tablets of the Cross Group at Palenque; cf. Schele, 1987), the Mother Goddess gives birth to triplet gods over an eighteen-day interval; two of these gods figure centrally in the alter-ego imagery of rulership on stone monuments and in underworld scenes on pottery throughout the Classic Period (200-900 A.D.). They are also transformations of the Hero-Twins *Hunahpu* and *Xbalanque* of the *Popol Vuh,* the genesis myth of the Quiche Maya, a highland tribe in Guatemala (Tedlock, 1985). Since Michael Coe's (1973, 1978) demonstration that many Classic pottery scenes echo events in the *Popol Vuh,* it is now clear that the Quiche have preserved an ancient mythos, a version of which formed a substratum of Classic Maya culture.

The third god born to the Goddess, *K'awil,* becomes the patron of lineage blood. His name means "sustenance"; his image adorns the handles of royal penis-perforators, depicted in the iconography and known archaeologically. He is the god who paces the quadripartite

celestial cosmogram; he is the god who is reborn when offerings of blood are made at important period endings. It is the role of man to recreate the gods' act of creation, and this god of lineage blood may perhaps be identified with the first entity to give order to man's existence on earth, according to the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Roys, 1967).

Maya kings are often depicted in female attire when they perform rites of genital bloodletting; they wear a characteristic but shortened beaded skirt, and a belt emblem symbolic of women. We will see that blood offerings from the penis assure fertility; from ethnographic sources we also know that many Mayan people regard menstrual blood as the essence of the human fetus; nine "bloods" make a baby (Neuenswander, n.d.). In an appropriation of the numinous feminine (and what culture does not fear menstrual blood?) Maya kings may be borrowing and reshaping a mystery of earlier times, or of antecedent matriarchal myths. Here we have another example of motif inversion. Evidence for this practice abounds in other cultures. In the *Popol Vuh,* the Hero-Twins are ballplayers, born in the underworld of the spittle of First Father and a daughter of the Lords of Death. After relocating to heaven and reaching adolescence, they are summoned into the underworld to play the sacred ballgame against the Lords of Death. Before they go, they each plant an ear of corn in the center of their house, and they tell their worried grandmother that if either of them dies, so shall the corn plant that he planted. This way, she will not worry needlessly. Herein we see one manifestation of the equation between a god and a sacred cultigen.

The travails of the twins in *Xibalba* (as the underworld is known) are many and long; they engage the Death Lords in the ballgame, overcome their treachery through cleverness and a streak of immortality, willingly immolate themselves and become burnt bone which is ground and thrown into the river. They become fish, and then are reinstated as gods, whereupon they return to *Xibalba* as wandering magicians, and trick the Death Lords into allowing themselves to be sacrificed, with the promise that they will be brought back to life. They are not brought back, and so the first shamans triumph over death. This all happens before the first humans are created. It is these trickster-shaman gods whom the Maya rulers take as their alter-egos during rituals, dressing in the attire and holding the insignia corresponding to each.

In the *Popol Vuh, Tohil* is a storm god who lives in a mountain, and who offers fire to the first humans in exchange for their allowing him to suckle their armpits. We later learn that this suckling is a metaphor for heart sacrifice. And while the *Popol Vuh* is a late version of the tale,

we may assume that the story is ancient. Herein we have the charter for heart sacrifice, and a charter for man as "the mother of the gods"—an epithet which appears not only in hieroglyphic texts but as the name for the shaman in Quiche. The word is *chuchkahaw* "the mother of our lord".

The storm god *Tohil* may also be a reflex of Classic rain gods, who give not only rain but fire, since lightning strikes are a primary source of fire for man. Fire is needed to burn the fields (and was no doubt in man's hands long before the first fields were burned); rain is needed to nourish the growing crop. The present-day shamans of Yucatan are also rainmakers, as they are in every land where the rain gods are fickle beings.

K'awil, the Classic god of the perforator, is typically adorned with leaves and shoots of the maize plant, symbolizing fertility. From this we may infer that lineage blood was equated with fertility and the growing maize, that the king's blood was in fact the life of the land. This theme has been stressed by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (1959), who found it echoed in stories of ritual regicide as well as in the myths of the dying savior gods. We find it in the Grail legend as well.

The maize deity *Hun Nal Ye,* First Father, is characterized by his beauty and youth, is associated with fertility, and is featured in sacrificial scenes on Classic pottery (Friedel, Schele, and Parker, 1993). Here we have a startling reiteration of the Old World theme: the youthful sacrificed god of vegetation who is eternally reborn. His head appears as maize ears on the famous Foliated Cross at the Maya site of Palenque in southern Mexico. Jung, in *Symbols of Transformation* (Fig. 41a), was the first to posit the Maya crosses at Palenque as manifestations of the World Tree. The image which appears at the base of the Foliated Cross also appears on loincloths of rulers, suggesting that the ruler's penis (and by extension, the rest of him) is the *axis mundi.* A related cross, with the same polymorphic serpent-bird perched atop it, falls into the Underworld with the dead king Pacal on the sarcophagus lid of the Tablet of the Inscriptions at Palenque; together they enter the open skeletal jaws of the Underworld Dragon, but with a certainty of rebirth (recalling the rebirth from ground bone of the Hero Twins). Thus this cross (which is in its dimensions like the Christian cross) symbolizes both death and rebirth. Furthermore, the Foliated Cross referred to earlier is the central icon in a panel which bears a hieroglyphic text specifying the relationship between the god of lineage blood and his descendant, the current king of Palenque.

The Maya were once thought to be peace-loving, but epigraphy and iconography tell another story (Schele and Miller, 1986: Ch. 5). At regular intervals, often dictated by the movements of the planet Venus,

they engaged in ritual battle for the purpose of obtaining prisoners for sacrifice. We know little of the dialogue between captor and captive beyond the posture of submission of the latter, but we may infer some things about it from exchanges between captor and captive in the Aztec "flowery wars". There, the captor called the captive "son" and the latter called his captor "father" (Sahagún, 1951: Book 2). A formal relation was thus established. We will learn more about this shortly. A Colonial Period play translated by Dennis Tedlock from the Achi dialect of Quiche concerns a dialogue between the captor, a noble captive, and the captor's chief (Tedlock, personal communication, 1989). It underscores the lengthy formalities antecedent to sacrifice and the acceptance by the captive of his mission. Nonetheless, he is carefully guarded and does attempt unsuccessfully to escape. We are reminded of the words "I would stay and I would flee" spoken by Christ in the apocryphal gospel of John.

Unlike our own silver-backed males, Maya kings and nobles were not exempt from obligations on the battlefield. They too ran the risk of capture and sacrifice, either by decapitation or by heart excision. Their participation in the process closes the distance between the priest-king and the victim, and strengthens the identity referred to earlier.

One image from a Classic monument at Piedras Negras shows what may be either quetzal plumes or vegetation sprouting from the excised heart. In decapitation scenes from pre-Maya cultures we see serpents springing from the severed neck; this motif reappears in the ballcourt panels of Chichen-Itza in Yucatan. It is this scene which led to the controversy over the destiny of the winners of the sacred ballgame, but there is in fact no evidence suggesting that they were sacrificed, as Joseph Campbell (1988:108) entertains. In some cases, captives were probably dressed as ballplayers and made to play the game (Schele and Miller, 1986: Ch. 6), with the outcome certain; this finds kinship with the enticement of the Hero-Twins by the Lords of Death: *come play ball with us; you're gonna lose, and you're gonna die".* The foregoing does not negate Campbell's premise of "going to the sacrifice as the winning stroke of life", but rather serves to focus on the dual nature of the victim: he is a man, and he is a god. The god goes triumphantly; the man will escape if he can.

The murals at Bonampak, as well as Classic polychrome pottery, depict Maya ritual torture prior to sacrifice; this is a practice of which the Aztecs are thought to be generally innocent. Some of the same mortifications practiced on captives were undertaken by the rulers upon themselves, though certainly not the severest ones, such as the breaking of limbs, burning, and disembowelment. These self-mortifications might accompany captive torture and sacrifice, but they were as

likely to occur in other contexts. Perforation of the ears, tongue, and genitals is documented in various scenes. A specific tongue autosacrifice at Yaxchilan on the part of women resulted in the appearance of a vision serpent, out of whose mouth emerged the lineage ancestor. The blood-soaked cord which she pulled through her tongue was burned in a bowl filled with bark paper, and the coiling smoke of the burning rope became the serpent in an alchemy which is echoed in modern Maya folktales and dream interpretation systems (Thompson, 1930; Bruce, 1979): ropes and snakes are a paired motif; the one presages the other. As in the Old World, burning is the vehicle of transformation. The smoke of the burnt offering ascended to heaven, carrying with it the essence. A Kekchi Maya youth once told me that copal smoke is the channel of communication with one's dead relatives.

In the shamanic texts of Conquest-period Yucatan (Roys, 1967), we find images of lineage foundation laid out on a quadripartite cosmogram; at each corner we find a sacred tree, sacred stones and birds. In other versions we find a four-sided arbor, and at each corner, sacred male genitals and splotches of blood associated with birth. While we don't yet know many details of Classic Maya foundation rites, we do know specifics of the rites of royal accession. One pattern elucidated by Linda Schele and Mary Miller in *The Blood of Kings* (1986: Ch. 2) involves binding the victim into a seat on a scaffold in front of the ruler-to-be and his attendants. He is tortured in a manner designed to spill as much blood as possible, and then he is dispatched and cut loose from the scaffold. The ruler wades through the pooled blood and climbs a cloth-draped ladder onto the scaffold, leaving bloody footprints. He takes the seat once occupied by the captive, and dons a headdress symbolic of birth. The scaffold is draped with cloth bearing the image of the double-headed Celestial Monster, whose heads are associated with the Hero-Twins. This transformation of the scaffold completes the identification of the ruler with the *axis mundi*, which the scaffold also symbolizes, as does the aforementioned arbor. These images now flesh out the Maya version of the World Tree constellation, which, like its Old World equivalent, occupies the cosmic midpoint and embraces both life and death.

There is bounteous archaeological evidence for human sacrifice among the Maya; we see this in the form of slain captives placed at the doors to tombs, skeletons without grave goods stuffed into cracks in deep caves (MacLeod, n.d., Reents-Budet and MacLeod, in press). Many of the latter were infant sacrifices, and we learn from early Colonial sources that the rain gods, who occupy caves, preferred children. Many royal graves have either other skulls or effigy heads associated with them; some burials have the skull placed between the knees,

suggesting decapitation. In one cave I investigated in Belize, more than forty skeletons without skulls were tucked into cracks or laid on ledges; we found the skulls in a walled-off corner of the cave. Supportive evidence is seen in the images of rulers on stone monuments who have trophy heads on their belts.

The image of the crucifix made a strong impression on the Maya, such that during occasional lapses in the sixteenth century, the Maya took the new motif to heart and occasionally crucified their victims (Thompson, 1970:177), after which heart excision was performed. On the one hand, the Maya could be said to have re-concretized an image designed to spiritualize the archetype; on the other hand, we may find in these events a synthesis involving appropriation and identification with the conquerors, or perhaps even a motive of defiance and mockery of the new religion and its sanctioned sacrificial image.

A final Maya source is a Colonial text, titled "The Song of the Archer" (Sodi, 1976), in which the rite of arrow sacrifice is featured. The song praises the youth and beauty of the chosen victim, lingers on the image of his suffering as he is pierced by arrows which do not kill immediately. The gods, we are told, are pleased to see one so beautiful suffer a little. This calls to mind the archetypal Son-Lover, a consort of the Great Mother, and makes one wonder whether the Mother Goddess is not still demanding her due below the patriarchal veneer of Precolumbian Maya society. We may recall that the triplet gods were born of a primordial Goddess. Furthermore, the Creator who paces off the world in the *Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Roys, 1967) is accompanied by his aunt and his maternal grandmother. And finally, the Hero Twins of the *Popol Vuh* set forth from their grandmother's house—perhaps a metaphor for the emergence of a patriarchal hero-cycle from the bosom of an older matriarchal order.

It is appropriate now to supplement what we have inferred of the Mesoamerican blood complex with a few words about the Aztecs, who have for so many years basked in the sacrificial limelight. Much of what we know of their ceremonies comes from the writings of Spanish chroniclers—conquistadors and clergymen who were present at the conquest and during its immediate aftermath. Often this information was relayed in rich detail to the Spaniards by Aztec nobles who witnessed these rites. The most exhaustive and reliable source among these is the series of volumes by Fray Bernardo de Sahagun (1950) known as *The Florentine Codex,* from whose volume on ceremonies (Book 2) most of the following descriptions of Aztec rites are taken.

Blood Sacrifice in the Aztec World

We might begin with a comparison made by Jung in his *Transformation Symbolism in the Mass* (1958:168-172). In this rite, called *teocualli* (which means "god-eating"), an effigy of the war god *Huitzilopochtli* was formed from a pasty dough made of crushed poppy seeds. The myth of the death of the god was recounted: his slaying by *Quetzalcoatl* in the presence of the king, the breaking up of his body, in which his heart is given to the king to eat and the rest divided out among those present. During the ceremony, the edible effigy is likewise apportioned, with Moctezuma receiving the heart. Jung considers this ritual to be parallel to the Christian Mass.

Like the Postclassic Maya, the Aztecs also practiced arrow sacrifice, but heart excision was the favored rite. *Huitzilopochtli* was honored with these sacrifices on a nearly daily basis, if we believe some accounts. At the close of important calendrical cycles, hearts were offered to *Tonatiuh,* the sungod. In fact, most gods were routinely granted such favors, with the exception of *Quetzalcoatl,* about whom there is some ambiguity. Legend has it that he was a culture-bringer who disavowed sacrifice; he may well have been a historical king of the pre-Aztec period. His cult spills over into the Maya area, where he is known as *Kukulcan:* both names mean "feathered serpent". Nonetheless, codices from Central Mexico depict *Quetzalcoatl* with a knife in his hand, gouging out an eye. His story is far too long to tell here, but we see in his ambiguity the struggle toward spiritualization mentioned at the beginning of this discussion. The ancient Greeks were certainly divided on the issue of human offerings, and we have seen the traces of struggle among the Israelites.

The rain god *Tlaloc* was particularly fond of children, as was his counterpart *Chaac* among the Maya. Children of exceptional beauty, or with certain signs like double cowlicks, were bought from their parents, with the words "these are precious blood-offerings. The rain gods receive them with rejoicing". The children were encouraged to cry, for this symbolized the rain which would come. But when onlookers wept for the children, which we are told did happen, they were consoled with the assurance that the rain gods were already pleased, and that the tears were a good sign. The image of weeping onlookers is an important one, in that it is a clue that among the Aztec also, sacrifice stirred compassion for the victim.

We may recall the surrogate father-son relationship which obtained at the time of capture. We can only wonder about the commitment involved in this relationship on the part of the captive. Díaz de Castillo (1973) describes one case wherein the Spanish soldiers freed

a Tlaxcalan captive of the Aztecs, but he refused to return home, having consigned himself to his fate, and to the honor which accompanied it.

Sahagún tells us that in rites of captive sacrifice, the victim would often dance with his captor, thus cementing the bond between them for all to see. Not all captives were so cooperative, however; occasionally one did go kicking and screaming. But this was considered shameful; it tarnished the glory of his passage.

There were several prolonged rites of god impersonation which carried to exquisite extremes the process of bonding between the victim and the community. One honored *Quetzalcoatl,* and lasted forty days, during which the youth was revered and feasted; he wore both mask and attire of the god. He was also kept caged at night, to preclude an unseemly escape. At the end, it was critical that he maintain equanimity, and not appear sad. To that end, he was given a large measure of pulque to drink.

The most elaborate of the impersonation rites honored *Tezcatlipoca,* the Smoking Mirror and prototype sorcerer-god, the most powerful of all. In this figure we catch a reflection of the primordial shaman; the dark mirror symbolizes the doorway between the worlds. His other characteristic (shared with the Maya god *K'awil)* was a serpent foot. Kent Reilly (personal communication) has suggested that the archaic forerunner of both of these was an Olmec deity portrayed at a cave shrine. The Olmec civilization predates that of the Classic Maya by a thousand years.

To return to the drama: the youth chosen to impersonate *Tezcatlipoca* was perfection in the extreme, smooth skinned, without blemish, and with long straight hair. The form of his buttocks was even specified, which certainly suggests a sexual component if his perfection did not. He was wined and dined like a king; people sighed at him, begged favors and mementos, kissed the ground he walked on. He went everywhere festooned with flowers and jewels. He carried many flutes, and played them to the delight of his audiences. He was treated as a god by the emperor Moctezuma. During the last twenty-day month of his life, he was given four brides, who impersonated major goddesses. He danced and feasted through his last four days, then was taken by canoe to the temple where he was to be sacrificed. As he climbed the steps of the temple, he broke his flutes one by one. At the summit he was seized by the priests and his heart excised.

If we trust the accounts of Sahagún's informants, cannibalism was apparently practiced to some degree. The captor might retain a choice portion of the victim's body, or make a gift of it to the king. Sahagún even provides favored recipes for the preparation of human flesh. These accounts have led Harris (1977:105-110) to advocate the eco-

nomic motive (i.e. the need for protein in times of game depletion) as the key to "the riddle of Aztec sacrifice", following an initial suggestion by Michael Harner (1975). In contrast, Arens (1979) ventures that there is very little evidence for actual cannibalism among the Aztecs; this is based upon his examination of Sahagún's writing, and his assessment of it as "a mosaic filled in by various artisans under the direction of a master craftsman who had a projected completed vision in mind" (p. 68). He points out that, unlike the descriptions of Aztec sacrifice, which were detailed accounts corroborated by many eyewitnesses, the references to cannibalism in Sahagún's Book 2 are vague, indirect suppositions. He also points out that the Aztecs expressed fears of the Europeans as man-eaters during the initial stages of contact; these reciprocal attributions (which might be understood as reciprocal projections of the Shadow) only serve to reiterate Arens' comment that "truth is often the first casualty of any war" (p. 60). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that recently deciphered Maya inscriptions appear to refer to the sacrifice and eating of war prisoners.

A pattern seen in the non-Judaic Old World is reiterated among the Aztec: that of sending a plethora of retainers along to the Otherworld, for keeps, when a singularly important ruler was buried. The ruler was cremated along with the bodies of the slaves, who were first killed by heart removal. A similar pattern has been archaeologically reconstructed for the Maya (Schele, pers. comm. 1988).

The Aztecs have gained much attention for the sheer numbers sacrificed: in one account by Sahagún, when the Great Temple was inaugurated (recalling foundation sacrifices in the Old World), somewhere between 14,000 and 80,000 captives were slain. The streets ran with blood, and everyone was required to attend. Even the lesser number seems most unreasonable for a four-day ceremony, with the priests working three shifts, but whatever the figures, it was a mind-boggling extravaganza, one which begs for special consideration, and for details and motives which will never be available. If the economic directive cannot be invoked, we are left with other speculations: (1) the singular importance of the dedicatory event, coupled with political agendas of the elite; (2) a current plethora of Tlaxcalan captives, and no place to put them; (3) an insatiable "sacrificial crisis" (following Girard's suggestion); (4) an insatiable archetypal directive. Perhaps all are to some extent correct.

Aztec priests performed autosacrifice routinely; they were described by the Spaniards as bedecked in reeking, blood-spattered robes, their hair matted with clotted blood, their ears bearing the wounds of perforation. They were pariahs of a sort—very powerful

ones. They did most of the dirty work, but the king also sacrificed captives, sometimes on a daily basis.

The Spanish conquerors (Díaz de Castillo, 1973), in their accounts of Aztec rites, focused mainly on the offering of human hearts to the sun god, *Tonatiuh,* to keep him on track. But an examination of the later record demonstrates that more energy was devoted to fertility and protection of the crops—a pattern we would expect in an agricultural orthodoxy. The flowing blood, the burned hearts were considered food for the gods in a relationship of reciprocity: they feed us, and we feed them.

In neither the Aztec nor the Maya case can we directly establish guilt and atonement as a prime mover in pre-Christian rites of sacrifice. This does not preclude its presence, but the concept of "sin" as a barrier between the realms is not universal.

The Mesoamerican Sacrificial Complex and the Judeo-Christian Sacrificial Complex: A Comparison

We might, as an exercise, graft what we know of the Aztecs onto what we know of the Maya, remaining mindful of known and posited cultural differences. Many shared features crisscross Mesoamerica, from calendars to cosmograms to calques (loan translations, such as gold being "excrement of the sun"), and most scholars agree that the threads of Mesoamerican history suggest that its diverse cultures evolved from the "mother culture" of the Olmecs. We thus have some justification for suggesting that there is a pan-Mesoamerican sacrificial complex. Taken together, these two civilizations present many important parallels with the Judeo-Christian sacrificial complex. The concept of "the blood of the covenant" would ring true if translated into a Mayan tongue. In Abraham's case, the covenant is the lineage. In both cultures under discussion, blood is divine.

Foundation sacrifices, involving buildings or lineages, appear in both traditions.

The Maya practiced and still practice animal sacrifice in caves, at mountaintop shrines. At a mountaintop shrine, Abraham's hand was stayed. The Aztecs took children to mountaintops for sacrifice.

The World Tree complexes of both the Old World and the New share striking similarities; the sap of the tree is the blood of the king is the life of the land; the tree is the cross is the cosmic midpoint is the revolving door between life and death.

The theme of circumcision, particularly if it is a reflex of more archaic matriarchal rites, resounds in that most hallowed act of Maya rulers: penis perforation. While the fecundity factor of genital blood has only been cited in passing, it is clearly a theme shared by both cultures. By this blood the earth is nourished. Genital blood may be a surrogate for the menstrual blood which builds the fetus. An old Lacandon Maya of the early part of this century nicked his penis with an obsidian blade and sprinkled the blood in the four corners of his newly-planted cornfield. Are we told what the Hebrews did with their foreskins? It is important to remember that the Hebrews were herders at heart, while the Maya were planters.

Taking into account the Maya king's participation in the sacrificial Venus wars, we find that the variations on the theme of ritual regicide appear in both Old World and New.

On both continents smoke is a vehicle of communication with the god.

The rite of eating the god appears in both worlds; it takes in both cases the form of an edible effigy which is broken and distributed.

On both continents (Judaism excepted), the principal cultigen is deified, and is a reflection of the dying son-lover of the Great Mother.

The dual nature of the victim is highlighted in both worlds. He stands in the doorway; he is both man and god. The man would escape, while the god embraces his destiny. And in both worlds that destiny is a blissful and eternal sojourn in the afterlife.

In both the Aztec and Maya cultures, we find ritual which forges an identity between the victim and the captor or priest; the images of captive and captor dancing, and of the king occupying the scaffold seat, create a deliberate ambiguity whose resolution is a mystery in the truest sense of the word.

From what we know of the elaborate choreography, the dramatic stage-set, the obligation of the masses to attend these rites in both Mesoamerican cultures, we may assume that the crowd gave and received power by its presence. They were witnesses to an awesome transformation; they were permitted by their bond with the victim to experience a dress rehearsal of their own passage through the doorway. In the celebration of the Mass, we also find this group directive toward a transformative experience; those who accept the transubstantiation of the bread and wine are rewarded with a view through the door.

We have seen that in both worlds, a movement toward spiritualization appeared. This reached full flowering shortly after the death of Christ, who, because of what history has made of him, has taken a heroic step beyond the role of the son-lover. We will never know how

the figure of *Quetzalcoatl*-as-redeemer might have asserted itself had the Spaniards not come; certainly the Aztecs were ready for a major overhaul, as were the Romans when Christianity came along.

A Modern Western Sacrificial Complex?

Paradoxically, many of the foregoing images of death, in contrast with the usual fare in the media, stir something vital within us, something which is not awakened by the smorgasbord of gratuitous violence, although there may be a modicum of bloodlust here as well.

Joseph Campbell, in *The Power of Myth,* (1988:112) affirms Abelard's view that the purpose of Christ's crucifixion was to evoke compassion and make atonement possible thereby. *Passion* and *compassion* are two sides of a coin; they purge our hearts of materialism and egoism, and inspire us to a loftier goal. Abelard's interpretation also serves to make the murky water of "original sin", with its implicit polarities, stand clear. A line from a song by Leonard Cohen comes to mind:

> *"I've been where you're hanging;*
> *I think I can see how you're pinned;*
> *when you're not feeling holy,*
> *your loneliness says that you've sinned".*

Alienation and compassion are mutually incompatible states of being, and yet they interact in a diachronic symbiosis which gives definition to each. Alienation hinders not only our relationships with others, but also the relationships between the protagonists on the inner stage of the psyche. It blocks access to the archetypal Self, in which polarities, which can all be understood in terms of I vs. other, dissolve into unity. In our pilgrimage to the shrine of this elusive image, we may find landmarks in the commentary of Jungians, who in different ways regard the urge toward sacrifice to be an essential quality of the hero. Here is a passage from Erich Neumann's *The Origins and History of Consciousness:*

> "But the hero, as the vehicle of this effort at compensation, becomes alienated from the normal human situation and from the collective. This decollectivization entails suffering, and he suffers at the same time because, in his struggle for freedom, he is also the victim and representative of the

obsolete, old order and is forced to bear the burden of it in his own soul.

The significance of this fact has already been pointed out by Jung, who speaks of the fatal compulsion that draws the hero towards sacrifice and suffering.

Whether his deeds are looked upon as services, as with Herakles, whose life, like the life of many if not all heroes, is a series of strenuous labors and difficult tasks, or whether this symbolism takes the form of a bull-sacrifice as with Mithras, or crucifixion as with Jesus, or being chained to the Caucasus as with Prometheus, always and everywhere we meet with the motif of sacrifice and suffering.

The sacrifice to be made may mean sacrificing the old matriarchal world of childhood or the real world of the adult; sometimes the future has to be sacrificed for the sake of the present, sometimes the present so that the hero may fulfill the future. The nature of the hero is as manifold as the agonizing situations of real life. But always he is compelled to sacrifice normal living in whatever form it may touch him, whether it be mother, father, child, homeland, sweetheart, brother, or friend.

Jung puts it that the danger to which the hero is exposed is 'isolation in himself'. The suffering entailed by the very fact of being an ego and an individual is implicit in the hero's situation of having to distinguish himself psychologically from his fellows. He sees things they do not see, does not fall for the things they fall for—but that means that he is a different type of human being and therefore necessarily alone. The loneliness of Prometheus on the rock or of Christ on the cross is the sacrifice they have to endure for having brought fire and redemption to mankind."

—*The Origins and History of Consciousness* p. 378-379

Neumann paints a picture of sacrifice as the companion to alienation, rather than its catharsis. And yet, if we move through the Passion toward the Resurrection, Christ becomes symbolic of unity and transcendence which were not possible before his death on the cross. The hero-cycle always has a season of reconciliation. In *Ego and Archetype,* Edward Edinger advises us that alienation is a necessary stage through which the ego must pass before it may turn again toward the Self. Before resolution of opposites can be experienced, the ego must

endure suspension between them. He cites (1973:58) a patient of Rollo May's, who, after a long struggle with alienation due to having been an illegitimate child, had a spontaneous breakthrough which she labeled *"I am"*. She described this revelation as a return to a personal Eden, beyond good and evil, in which she, the child, found the grammatical subject of her own sentence.

What May has called the "I am" experience, Edinger interprets as a restitution of the ego-Self axis, in this case triggered by a strong positive transference. Transference is the projection of an inner protagonist upon an outer figure. This has relevance for the witness to an act of blood sacrifice, who in his projection upon the human/divine victim may find an ontological safety net as he gazes through the door between the worlds. But to modern man, who in theory places a high value on the sovereignty of the individual, there is something suspect about an ontology built on the premise of deliberately causing suffering and death to other beings in order to facilitate a peek through the door. We overtly object to this as atavistic, predatory, irresponsible; we claim to want this death-practice, this practice-death transformed into spirit. No matter that as a culture we revel in the glory of war and the deeds of young lost heroes; Tolkien's (1965) *Lord of the Rings* resounds with the echoes of this thrall, and we savor and reread it. And our culture's fascination with violence has already been mentioned. Perhaps Girard is correct; perhaps there is a voice within us which craves a sacrificial experience, but now we draw the line at deliberate *ritual* prearrangement. Our military strategy, which sends forth the young to die for the political and economic interests of the old, might be viewed as deliberate *secular* prearrangement.

On the individual level, perhaps we thirst for a sanctification of our own wounds, which are for most of us foreordained. They come with the territory, so to speak—the territory being a fragmented and alienating society whose mythic framework has been ruptured and appropriated for political ends. The process of sanctification must of necessity bare these wounds to us. This experience will at first be horrifying; it may be overwhelming. As we noted earlier, Jung writes that this upwelling of psychic pain may often be prefigured by dreams of rites of sacrifice or torture.

The image of Christ crucified, the redemptive power of the Blood of the Lamb—these have endured for two millennia not only because of a lucky break in Christianity's early political history, but also because for its followers, meditation upon the crucifixion slakes the thirst for sacrifice. In Christian doctrine, Christ's suffering was foreordained by the sin of Adam. For those of us who can either suspend disbelief in dogma or embrace the myth fully without the crutch of absolute

historicity, the image of a man agonizing on a cross can draw the poison out of our wounds. Edinger speaks eloquently of this process:

> "One of the essential features of the Christian myth and the teaching of Jesus is the attitude taken toward weakness and suffering. A real transvaluation of ordinary values is brought about. Strength, power, fullness, and success, the usual conscious values, are denied. Instead, weakness, suffering, poverty, and failure are given special dignity. This point is developed throughout Jesus' teachings and is given its supreme representation in the crucifixion itself where God is degradingly scourged and dies the shameful death of a criminal on the cross. This is what was beyond the comprehension of the Romans, for whom honor, strength, and manly virtue were the supreme values. Psychologically understood, we have here, I think, a clash between the goals and values of two different phases of ego development. Preoccupation with personal honor and strength and the despising of weakness is inevitable and necessary in the early stages of ego development. The ego must learn to assert itself in order to come into existence at all. Hence the Christian myth has little place in the psychology of the young.
>
> It is in the later phases of psychic development, when a fairly stable and mature ego has already been achieved, that the psychological implications of the Christian myth are especially applicable. In fact, the Christian myth presents us with attitudes and images pertaining to the individuation process which is specifically a task of the second half of life. At this phase of development, the image of the suffering deity is immensely pertinent. This symbol tells us that the experience of suffering, weakness, and failure belongs to the Self and not just to the ego. It is the almost universal mistake of the ego to assume total personal responsibility for its sufferings and failures. We find it, for instance, in the general attitude people have toward their own weaknesses, an attitude of shame or denial. If one is weak in some respect, as everyone is, and at the same time considers it ignominious to be weak, he is to that extent deprived of self-realization. However, to recognize experiences of weakness and failure as manifestations of the suffering god striving for incarnation gives one a very different viewpoint."
>
> —*Ego and Archetype* p. 152-153

"In summary, the blood of Christ represents the primal power of life itself as manifested on the psychic plane, with profound potentiality for good or ill. As a symbol of the fluid essence of Selfhood and totality it contains and reconciles all opposites. If it comes as a fiery influx of undifferentiated energy it can destroy the petrified or undeveloped ego. On the other hand it is the nourishing, supporting, binding, life-promoting energy which flows from the transpersonal center of the psyche and which maintains, validates, and justifies the continuing existence of the personal center of the psyche, the ego".

—p. 259

Jung, too, has addressed this task of ego, which must renounce its claim in deference to the Self. He says, "the act of making a sacrifice consists in the first place in giving something *which belongs to me*. . .which bears the stamp of mineness". His view is that there are two ways to bring about this intentional loss:

"This conflict between conscious and unconscious is at least brought nearer to a solution through our becoming aware of it. Such an act of realization is presupposed in the act of self-sacrifice. The ego must make itself conscious of its claim, and the self must cause the ego to renounce it. This can happen in two ways:

(1) I renounce my claim in consideration of a general moral principle, namely that one must not expect repayment for a gift. In this case the 'self' coincides with public opinion and the moral code. It is then identical with Freud's superego because it is projected, and therefore essentially unconscious and identical with environmental circumstances.

(2) I renounce my claim because I feel impelled to do so for painful inner reasons which are not altogether clear to me. These reasons give me no particular moral satisfaction; on the contrary, I even feel some resistance to them. But I must yield to the power which suppresses my egoistic claim. Here the self is integrated; it is withdrawn from projection and has become perceptible as a determining psychic factor."

—"Transformation Symbolism in the Mass"
in *Psyche & Symbol* p. 210

". . .These two ways of renouncing one's egoistic claim reveal not only a difference of attitude, but also a difference of situation. In the first case the situation need not affect me personally and directly; in the second the gift must necessarily be a very personal one which seriously affects the giver and forces him to overcome himself. In the one case it is merely a question, say, of going to Mass; in the other it is more like Abraham's sacrifice of his son or Christ's decision in Gethsemane. The one may be felt very earnestly and experienced with all piety, but the other is the real thing.

So long as the self is unconscious it corresponds to Freud's superego and is a source of perpetual moral conflict. If, however, it is withdrawn from projection and is no longer identical with public opinion, then one is truly one's own yea and nay. The self then functions as a union of opposites and thus constitutes the most immediate experience of the Divine which it is psychologically possible to imagine."

—p. 211

We may recall that the "gift" concept was central to early anthropological interpretations of sacrifice, such as that of Tylor, and derivatively, that of Durkheim. We will also find that the "gift" motive, as voiced by a Lakota shaman, is central to the Plains Indians' sweatlodge and Sun Dance rites.

The Return to the Sun Pole: The Sacrificial Directive Among the Plains Indians

What might we infer about Native American traditions? Have we any right to speak of their psychological directives? We have found parallels, discussed above, in both image and ritual between New World and Old; can we therefore assume similar motives in sacrificial rites between Mesoamerica and native American peoples of the USA and Canada? There are serious problems with any synthesis, in that there is nothing like cultural homogeneity across the range of native North America, and the ethnohistorical record vis-a-vis preconquest Mesoamerica leaves us little hard psychological evidence. Native Americans, including the Mayas and Aztecs, have suffered disintegration and absorption at the hands of their conquerors. We have seen evidence suggesting that the compassion motive and the projection of

inner contents upon the figure of the dying god were also operative in Mesoamerica. We might assume that Mesoamericans, like ourselves and all peoples of the earth, were and are fascinated with the borderland between life and death.

One way we might get at some threads of the Mesoamerican sacrificial directive is via other Native Americans who continue to practice blood sacrifice in the manner of their ancestors (or so they say). I refer to the rite of the Sun Dance, forms of which were once widespread across the Great Plains, and whose popularity since decriminalization is now growing among Indians, with a burgeoning body of white support. In this rite, Sun Dancers make a vow the year before, often because of a dream; accompanying the vow is a prayer or request which may be as specific as bringing a son home from Vietnam (but which is never trivial), or as general as "peace on earth, goodwill toward men". Ritual sweat baths precede the rite. A perfect cottonwood tree is sought by four scouts; when it is found it is consecrated, cut down, and carried to the center of the community: the sacred circle. There it is firmly planted. This is the Sun Pole, which, given its central placement and its sacrificial purpose, is suggestive of the World Tree motif discussed earlier. The dance is done for four days around the pole; on the last day the dancer is attached to the pole by means of a thong tied to an eagle claw (or perhaps two) which is inserted into the flesh of his chest and fixed, so that the only way he can free himself is to tear the claw loose. He suffers a great deal. He is almost certain to receive a vision as he dances leaning back against the thong, blowing on his eaglebone whistle. This vision may be prophetic for him or for the planet: it may be anything sacred.

Lame Deer, a Lakota shaman, has some words we might take to heart on the matter (Lame Deer and Erdoes, 1972):

> "Many people do not understand why we do this. They call the sun dance barbarous, savage, a bloody superstition. The way I look at it, our body is the only thing which truly belongs to us. When we Indians give of our flesh, our bodies, we are giving of the only thing which is ours alone.
>
> If we offer *Wakan Tanka* a horse, bags of tobacco, food for the poor, we'd be making him a present of something he already owns. Everything in nature has been created by the Great Spirit, is part of Him. It is only our own flesh which is a real sacrifice—a real giving of ourselves. How can we give anything less?
>
> For fifty long years they jailed us if we danced the sun dance, calling it a crime, an 'Indian Offense'. Freedom of religion doesn't always include us Indians.

The sun dance is our oldest and most solemn ceremony, the 'granddaddy of them all', as my father used to say. It is so old that its beginnings are hidden as in a mist. It goes back to an age when our people had neither guns, horses, nor steel—when there was just us and the animals, the earth, the grass, and the sky.

Nowadays clever people study sun spots through giant telescopes, and your man-made little stars zoom around the earth as if they were late on a job. You have even landed on the moon and left a few plastic bags of urine there and a few chewing-gum wrappers. But I think the Indians knew the sun and the moon much better in those long-forgotten days, were much closer to them.

Huddling in their poor shelters in the darkness of winter, freezing and hungry, hibernating almost like animals, how joyfully, thankfully they must have greeted the life-giving sun, let it warm their frozen bones as spring returned. I can imagine one of them on a sudden impulse getting up to dance for the sun, using his body like a prayer, and all the others joining him one by one.

So they made this dance, and slowly, generation after generation, added more meaning to it, added to its awesomeness. My father taught me, as he had been taught by his father, the learning and teaching going back to the beginning of time.

Wi wanyang wacipi—the sun dance—is our greatest feast which brings all the people together. I told you of *hanblechia,* the vision quest, one man alone by himself on an isolated hilltop, communicating with the mystery power. Well, the sun dance is *all* the people communicating with *all* the mystery powers. It is the *hanblechia* of the whole Sioux nation.

The sun dance is the most misunderstood of all our rites. Many white men think of it as an initiation into manhood, or a way to prove one's courage. But this is wrong. The sun dance is a prayer and a sacrifice. One does not take part in it voluntarily but as the result of a dream, or a vision."

—*Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions,* p. 198-99

"Some white men shudder when I tell them these things. Yet the idea of enduring pain so that others may live should not strike you as strange. Do you not in your churches pray

> to one who is 'pierced', nailed to a cross for the sake of his people? No Indian ever called a white man uncivilized for his beliefs or forbade him to worship as he pleased."
>
> —p. 207-208

An extraordinary Classic Maya clay figurine from the island of Jaina off the north coast of the Yucatan Peninsula depicts a young man suspended by two perforations in the flesh of his upper back. This posture is identical to that of one variant of the Sun Dance rite, and the image strengthens our suspicion of continuity between the Lakota and the Maya practices of autosacrifice.

To the Lakota as to all Native Americans who have not been overwhelmed by Christianity, the earth is sacred and conscious, and its valleys and mountaintops, its caves, plants, trees, four-leggeds and two-leggeds, wingeds, those that creep and crawl, those that swim—are all sacred and conscious entities. In the Sun Dance and in the Sweat Lodge, all these beings hear the prayers. This reality is not part of the American mainstream, but some whites are adopting it, reinventing it, invoking matriarchal sources for it, asking Native Americans to teach them about it. The ritual giving of sweat in communion with all beings is a sacrifice which opens the door to *wakan,* or spirit; does it really differ psychically from the giving of blood? Recalling Jung's words about the purest and most personal ego-gift, can we claim this is not the same as Lame Deer's "gift of mineness"? Can we even suggest that the form of blood sacrifice performed in the Sun Dance, or the lesser "taking of flesh" in some sweat lodge rites, is a truly concrete manifestation of the archetype? Even Christianity has always found space for the giving of one's own flesh; it permits direct participation in the Passion. The Christian Penitentes of northern New Mexico are now stewards of the practice. Before we impose this carefully crafted, locally useful polar opposition of "spiritual vs. concrete" upon the Lakota, we must examine that drive to self-mortification within Christianity. For some Christians, a wholly nonmaterial sacrifice is insufficient. And we must accept the inevitable: in the Self, oppositions are dissolved into unity.

Before leaving Native America, I will share a relevant news release, dated August 21, 1989:

> *Sacred Pole Returned to Tribe after 101 Years*
> MACY, Neb. (AP)—A sacred pole topped with a human scalp and said to have the power of life and unity was presented to the Omaha Tribe on Sunday after being in a Boston museum for 101 years.

Yellow Smoke, the last keeper of the pole, which is believed to be more than 300 years old, entrusted it to the Peabody Museum at Harvard University because he doubted younger generations of Omahas would cherish it. Tribal officials recently negotiated its return.

"It will take up where it left off in 1888", Tribal Chairman Doran Morris said. "It is a central part of our lives. It will influence our children and grandchildren."

The pole, more than five feet long and four inches thick, is made of pine believed to have been cut in Nebraska in the 1600s or 1700s

At its top is a human scalp. Animal skin webbing wrapped around the middle of the pole contains feathers and down from cranes. A stake made from ash is at the bottom.

The Omaha, who were buffalo hunters, had a priest carry the pole from camp to camp. An annual renewal ceremony was held with the pole at its center to unify the tribe.

When the buffalo were wiped out, the Omaha settled on their reservation in eastern Nebraska and abandoned the ceremony.

A 1911 report by government ethnologists recounts the legend of the pole: the son of an Omaha chief was hunting alone in the forest when elders were in council to devise ways of keeping the tribe together. He came upon a tree that was luminous but remained unconsumed by its own light, the legend says. The tree was cut down, trimmed, adorned with a scalp and called a human being.

When the tribe gathered, the chiefs stood up and said, "you now see before you a mystery. Whenever we meet with troubles we shall bring our troublers to him (the pole). We shall make offerings and requests. All our prayers must be accompanied by gifts."

—*Austin American-Statesman,* August 21, 1989

Spiritual vs. Concrete: A Fuzzy Boundary

A crucifix bears a graphic, anguished image. The myths which move us often turn upon exquisite sacrificial motifs, such as those of the Oedipus tale, parent or child to the complex we may all have. Jung tells us that we may be assailed by dreams of torture and dismemberment.

These motifs drive the myths, spur the visions of shamans in many cultures. Jung advises us that they presage transformation, a second birth.

On the Jungian map, anyone who lives close to the edge of the Collective Unconscious, as do the poets, artists and visionaries of our culture, lives in psychic peril. But no one really escapes. Might we speculate that the public thirst for unredeemed gore is also underlain by the desire for transformation? The headline stories run red with accounts of the surfacing of barbarously concretized forms of the multi-archetypal constellation: satanic killings, mass suicides—or charter flights to the Otherworld? Live art gallery exhibitions featuring self-inflicted mutilation. And not so long ago: witches hanged, heretics burned.

On the altruistic side, we have many examples of heroic self-sacrifice both in war and in peacetime, wherein one person risks all to save another. Campbell has given us the example of motherhood as sacrifice of a parent's goals to the needs of her child.

Let us also reconsider the collective libido invested in the deaths of Martin Luther King and the Challenger astronauts. These events moved us in the way that hurricanes do, rekindling our communion as a species, but they also moved us in the idealized way of Christ, constellating the hero-at-the-gateway facet of the archetype in pure form, a form which stands synchronically outside the circle of ritual, but which binds us all. These deaths are potent events in our lives as a people; rituals of remembrance and sacred vows to carry their vision onward spring as green shoots from the ashes. But the dark fascination with morbid detail wells up from the same ground.

Yukio Mishima, the acclaimed Japanese playwright and novelist famous for his ritual self-disembowelment for a heartfelt political cause, had his first orgasm at age twelve upon leafing through a book on the Catholic saints and finding St. Sebastian pierced with arrows. He said that it set the course of his life. If so, an image designed to spiritualize has jumped the fence and found concrete expression. In mid-life Mishima impersonated the suffering St. Sebastian and had photographs taken. His was an unceasing struggle with a devouring image; did he win or did he lose?

Here are some verses of Phil Ochs, a folksinger-songwriter of the Sixties, which leave no doubt of his state of devouring intimacy with the archetype:

> *"The Spanish bulls are beaten; the crowd is soon beguiled;*
> *The matador is beautiful, a symphony of style;*
> *Excitement is ecstatic; passion places bets;*

Gracefully he bows to ovations that he gets;
But the hands that are applauding are slippery with [sweat,
And saliva is falling from their smiles.

So dance, dance, dance;
Teach us to be true;
Come dance, dance, dance,
'Cause we love you.

Then this overflow of life is crushed into a liar;
The gentle soul is ripped apart and tossed into the fire;
With the death of beauty, the victory of night;
Truth becomes a tragedy limping from the light;
The heavens are horrified; they stagger from the sight
As the cross is trembling with desire.

They say they can't believe it; it's a sacrilege, a shame;
Now who would want to hurt such a hero of the game?
But you know I predicted it; I knew he had to fall;
How did it happen? I hope his suffering was small;
Tell me every detail, for I've got to know it all,
And do you have a picture of the pain?

So dance, dance, dance;
Teach us to be true;
Come dance, dance, dance,
'Cause we love you."

—from "The Crucifixion"

A few years later, Phil Ochs hanged himself in his New York apartment. Negotiation grants no assurance that one will not be eaten. Here is a line from another of his songs, written in happier days:

There but for fortune go you or I.

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CLAYTON ESHLEMAN

FIVE POEMS FROM SECTION I OF *FROM SCRATCH*

REVERBERATIONS

Our journey had ceased to advance.
At that odd fork
we sensed the eternity we had spurned.
Being now led
everywhere, nowhere. Our journey into the fork
was molecular—a gate in every god
led only into cities of the dying,
to no cities of the dead.
Retreat seemed the only hope,
yet behind was ice,
the sphincter of a mastodon
a ragged halo in the fogged and snarling air.
Thus did we dig in here
as if below held a larger here
uncleaved by journey's division
inherent in every route.

*

There is a portion of the night
unlike port or storm, a gash
ribbed red, as if lit
with under fire, in which I am known
all around, seen through
as if with crossing spots.
Each organ has a faceless nave
leading to an altar absence
through which the world is rolling.

Being, weighed, is superstructure.
And "not"? Rim of the almost
tender night's containment.

*

Caught red-handed with the dawn,
I strained to see my catcher
masked, who thus received me
as sunlight re-sieves the lawn.

Deknowing had begun. The space between
predator and prey, I, Protean,
vanished as the curve sunk home:
pitcher balling spills of pitchers spilling fills.

*

Were one woman to tell the truth about her life,
Muriel Rukeyser wrote, the world would split open.
Rigoberta Menchu—did you lie?

Or does the world split instantly
while men retie and splice?

*

The snow as a sorcery
of air, to bevel and conceal
what we know of here:
that it is blank
at summer core,
without possessive,
a "t" away from there.
As if the dark
intensified were white,
and whiteness fully brought to light
the matrix springs of night.

AFTER READING ACKROYD'S *BLAKE*

There is no place in which imagination
can rest: take my father–
still do I see him in Nazi armband raking leaves,
I watch him now from the Rimbaud porthole,
he's an oily swirl of autumnal colors
clawing at the flesh of the earth.
In the back of his head a beacon pours yellow light
through the rooms of 4705. I see the egg clusters on walls,
the hives and bubbling sacs, organic 4705,
less a dwelling than a structure–
my mother slowly flaps through, a weeping manta ray
in an underworld of Biblical directives.
My father has just harvested several Negro children
who tried to pick up his precious fallen buckeyes.
He bound and gagged them, kept them in jars for months.
Sparky has been thrashed. I've been whipped.
How move into a statement on the nature of God?
I hold a globe of father-semen in my palm,
mold it into a grigri, then send it spinning into
the buckeye's crown. All perils have direct access to
the basement of man, where the chains and harrows
turn, and the Giant Forms one's parents are
move like the heads of mastodons through bottomless
vales of mist. The tusk face of my mother
now opens too, I see her Pandoric dilemma,
her terrible lack of confidence, doubt
like anatomical rift. I see my father
try to befriend me without knowing how.
He walks strapped to the frame of his father's vises.
Ancestral bellows pumped through him may end here.

HELMET

Last night I saw my face in my penis's head
wrapped in shining beards of semen,
weeping. As if I'd worn a helmet to bed
and forced my face out below.
There was no difference between its filmy wrapping and
the tears oozing from its folds,
its eyes, infantine, closed,
made me wish for a doctor's spatula,
to open AH and glimpse the tonsilwork
of the body throat.

When I arrive at full morbidity
my helmet will be complete, it will be
a helmet of man, hell met pell mell
insect lodge, with megocerotic horns,
it will be the inside of the male head,
my helmet, my hell full met, all the cannibalistic
lager, fungoid eaten skull insides
translate as Japanese brocade,
plum-color leather, this will be my helmet,
Neander-Cro-Magnon armistice
ear-flaps, silver bunting, with a great plume of snore—
leech lines labyrinthining the interior,
this womb this bell.

menstrous
Scarletherine ivy grappled to ~~Methodist~~ brick

Brattleboro

UNLEAVING

I threw myself on the leaf-strewn ground,
under the red maple I've watched grow 10 years
I wished the earth to take off,
a roving mastodon, with me clutched—
instead, I fisted leaves and rolled
up to the trunk, a newborn pup
up to a teat, I put a star in my mouth
counted its milky rays
then slid down the nightside of Eden
into the tunnels that map the underworld. . .

Who will read the fallen leaves? not in tea
but in drift, who will read
the urn of death? I see patches of its sides

coiling shreds the raising wind spits. . .

A dress of leaves for one who is ashes. . .

Each leaf a tiny tree of vascular bundles,
litterings that lift
the unappeasable need for inspiration,
for nothing's abstract concreteness,
the end of the world telescoped into the now
inconceivable beginning,
millennial patience casting anchor as it crests

Imagine this wet scat,
the "wanwood leafmeal" of these photosynthetic factories:
"under the influence of light, six molecules of carbon dioxide
combine with six of water to produce one molecule of sugar
and six of oxygen. This single molecule of sugar. . .is the basis
of life."
Say that the maple
produces leaves to feed itself, that they know
to unleave when no longer needed.

I am creating something to feed me:
serene blue-bellied hornets
drag their rickshaws out of repressed sheds
to the shores of Lake Gargoylalia,
they hover, waiting for the mutilated to be coughed up,
the lake belches, and like swans
robed in oily mist the bodies toss,
a few are speared and rickshaw deposited,
and now ticks and cockchafers get in line,
and thoughtchafers, a caterpillar confetti,
the vertebral thunder of a nest of dead leaves,
the abyss encapsulated in the Western God
whose African children are worm bores,
bags of glassy sore flows,
monstrous blending of all images
as I shuffle through these newsreels—
carotenoid thrust of Kali
shutting down chlorophyll,
and is not Shiva the purplescent meaty luster
in the still scarlet and violet oak?
There is a moment in every autumn
when angel is unzipped from watchfiend,
an unleaving, when remaining is letting go.
Persephone takes the erect invisible into her throat,
the icy but still igneous breeze
is the onset of Hades' ejaculation,
the snow to come, its lees.

DANIEL QUICK

TWO POEMS

PALMISTRY, PHRENOLOGY, MESMERISM

Frugal interpretation: the unhinged thumb—
A hallway unfettered—by veins—to Wrist.

A corridor, then: *pulses.* Low

-er, a palm speaks of children:

a girl born with lazy eye,
eldest
suffers a *respiratory ailment*

later, in life. A line beneath

The ring quotes, *medicine, hair-loss,* no—
A *loss of air,* a moist tongue in rain,

You will call the weather—inclement—Home.

Doctrine? ignites

a fevered chord

in mind, a sorrow *sparrows,* a sparrow

unseen cuts the air

sorrowed, to pattern:

A Glove, sewn of deer-skin; a Hat to cover
A scalped geography, to covet

inclension: a bent to *Architecture*

declension: a curiosity with hands,
cloth unraveling,

an inability of the eye to follow
in flight the Darning
Needle darting above the lake's edge

Written—on forehead—

a *tattered* future

Binds the wrists—a strand undone—vein from bone.
Undone, a strand of *pulse,* a ringed border, a palm lined,

The sky *overreaches,* Mesmer, a needle-length.

Hem the distant curve a mountain closer—

Comfort the Lake with *Nearing,*

Needling, needing—

Comfort us, a stitch more undone, a line
Into hand threaded

A future where clouds
unburden

the tongue, the dark tongue

Thread

a red tint in the eye as of rubbing

Thread in the hand an eye sewn open–
Mesmer–

ignore the wooddove's mumbling

Untwist last strings, unbind, hold slack in us those reins–
Mesmer–

ignore the woodduck's trembling

Cozen us a Knot.

SWIMMING

Beneath the planed, the oaken Sea–removes
A ring my secret minted, silver-minted,

Chased shut the eyelash refusal
Of dust, leaf-strung, stem-molded, mended.

Capillaries stumble inside the wrist, flutters
Their veil beneath skin, their *blue* veil

Lastly pulses *red.* Link my ear–
To Ocean's ear: *Whisper me my disaster*

Before it whispers me. Sewn together, I see
Wind blossom cold a sail into White

Flower steady wincing, walking away.
My mouth, concatenate–to Ocean's mouth:

Translate—how the wave's approach—
As proposal. Promised me, the Ocean parts

Its hair into braids, pulls back its blue veil
When enters a hand asking, Water? how cold.

To Ocean's waist—the ear threads its voice
Through the eye's needle, appears the sky

In tatters, the clouds un-hemmed, me:
Beside cold waters, standing. Taught

Chemistry how salt—eats silver—worthless.
Taught me: no ring dissolves, no leaf, none—

Yesterday, I did behave me carelessly,
When I did pray: Winter Ocean, open

For me, lonely as Table, as empty bowl—
I stepped dark, dark the Ocean stepped

Shut its oaken door.

ROBERTO TEJADA

HOME IMPROVEMENT

A ménage à trois of fashion, taste and the public eye, a basic conjunction of vanguard practice once involved a thorough disdain for middle-class complacency and a similar distrust of those institutions through which art-making is made available. Eventually canonized by the mainstream cultural apparatus whose indifference fueled a great deal of modernism's fundamental meanings—that is, stripped bare, to greater and lesser degrees, of its potential for social menace and aesthetic novelty, yet at the same time applauded by the stronghold of a market in need of newer and newer merchandise—late-modernist art has since had no choice but to be the reluctantly-cheerful participant-witness to the historical failures of the avant-garde as a cultural project. Over the last several decades, a pluralism (for some) and a chaos of styles (for others) has unavoidably given rise to more cynical pleasures and strategies in the sociology of taste, both for the enchanted and disenchanted alike.

With this in mind, and in an on-going series of investigations that began in 1994 with "The Comfortable Home," Ángel Ricardo Ricardo Ríos (Holguín, Cuba, 1996) has sought to express the kinds of problems outlined above. To this end, the artist fashioned oneiric shapes from the domestic realm out of a range of tectonic angles and curves into ironic emblems of social standing, with certain side-long allusions to soft sculpture. The result was a series of shameless hybrids and volumetric warps fusing the motifs of traditional furniture, pop-art's chromatic brashness, pre-modern costume and post-modern architecture. These works addressed how style and use are always at odds, not only with each other, but with the corresponding environment in which they find themselves positioned—be it the frigid white cube of the gallery, the executive halls of a corporate office, or the supposedly-hallowed safety of home sweet home.

A recent installation by the artist further explored the tentative underpinnings holding this vocabulary together. Divided into two separate spaces, one room reached near-suffocating temperatures produced by a series of stove-top gas burners that lined a square-shaped

brick-and-mortar base over which hung the thin wooden frame of a house. The other room was almost entirely dominated by a huge yellow taffeta-covered hoop-skirt, under whose folds you could make out the gas tank feeding the burners of the adjacent room by means of a rubber tube connecting the two spaces together. About the luxuries and miseries of communication, these fixtures and fittings aimed to posit the artwork as a surrogate of all those functional and decorative accouterments found in the home—perhaps even housebroken, yes, but liable to explode at any minute, or to go up in flames.

This concern has since evolved into "The New Space" project (1995-1997), a series of large-format canvases and small bronze sculptures—or what the artist prefers to call "New Objects." The canvases, sketched and painted as if to resemble oversized drawings, are literally portraits of Regency sofas, armchairs and window seats, seemingly undergoing a delusion of grandeur as they enact a civil war between the one-dimensional plane of the painting, the elegant comfort of the traditional decorative arts, and the protuberant gigantism of the urban skyline ballooning out of these otherwise hoity-toity pieces of living-room furniture.

In one canvas, a round ottoman becomes a virtual anemone of fabric, in swelling bars of magenta and white, as it floats up and beyond the edge of the frame, dripping a trail of paint. Forcing the domain of the potential purchasing public into the space of the gallery—with quips about the incompatibility of any other kind of content if they are to hang over that Louis-XIV-whatever—this canvas and others like it manage to roll (or stretch) pattern-painting and interior decoration into one—into fetishistic forms suggesting *House & Garden* illustrations suddenly on the brink.

Using what Rudolf Arnheim calls caricature's "morphology of deviation," Ricardo Ríos has successfully rendered into visual terms that eloquent idiomatic phrase in Spanish meaning "to spare no expense"—literally, "to throw one's house out the window." According to the artist: "These objects are conceived to assume a life of their own as works of art, regardless of their surroundings, and despite their essentially ambiguous or seemingly-absurd nature which forces them, in turn, to assume other functions with regard to the context in which a dialogue may take place." Positioned in the gallery or reproduced in a catalogue, these works have yet in fact to assume the full potentiality of their significance, and remain half-barred from so doing until they are reinstated once again into a domestic environment—that is, until they are finally given household status. In short, these paintings and sculptures by Ángel Ricardo Ricardo Ríos illustrate the kinds of relationships that arise between the artistic object and its specific context for

consumption, regardless of whether intent or aesthetic pleasures are successfully rendered possible–if not, more likely, frustrated altogether.

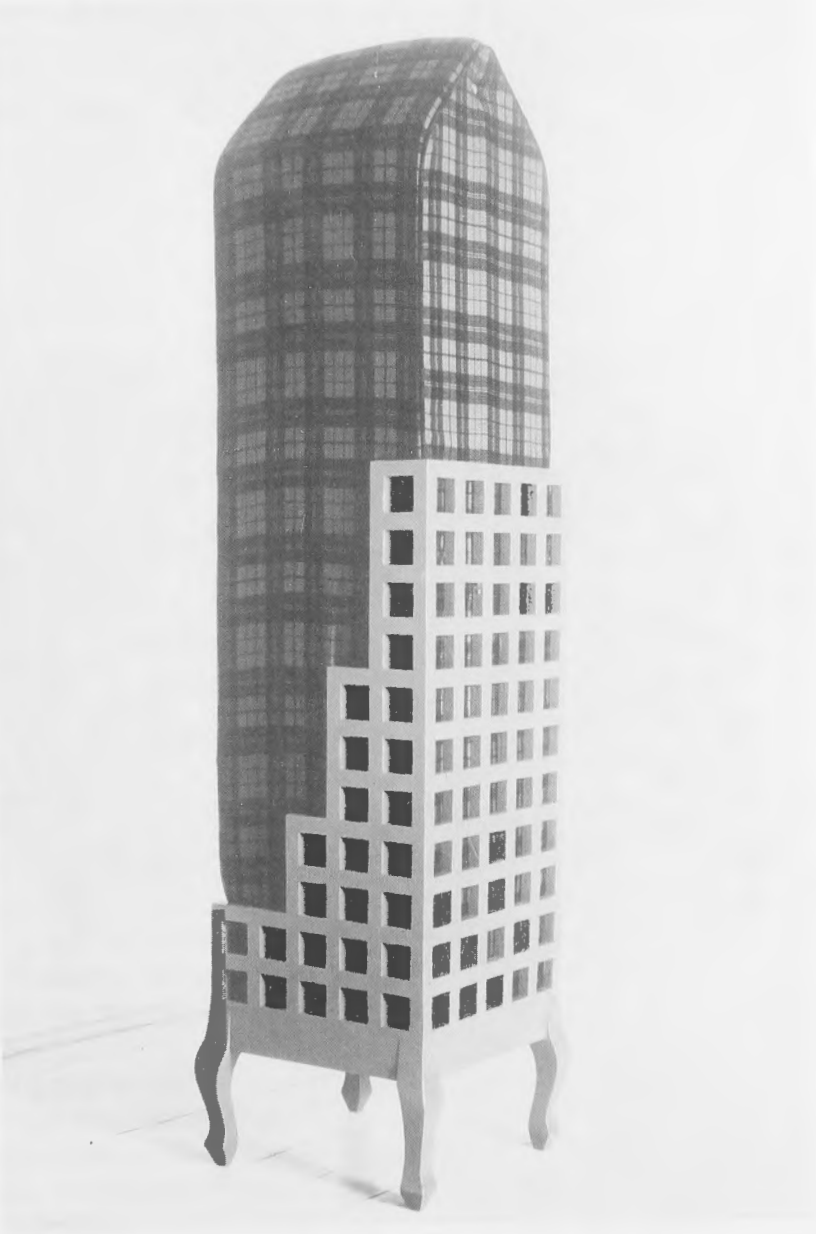
ANGEL RICARDO RICARDO RÍOS

FIVE WORKS

The Comfortable Home III, 1994
Wood, fabric, foam rubber / 150 x 150 x 50 cm
Photos courtesy of Galería Nina Menocal, Mexico City

The Comfortable Home, 1994
Wood, fabric, foam rubber / 150 x 70 x 70 cm

The Comfortable Home III, 1994
Wood, fabric, foam rubber / 150 x 50 x 50 cm



The Comfortable Home II, 1994
Wood, fabric, foam rubber / 150 x 40 x 40 cm

"New Space" Project, 1997
Wood, fabric, foam rubber / 147 x 198 cm

JACKSON MAC LOW

AN INNER SENSE OF CLOSURE ANOTHER DAY

{Forties 131}

An inner sense of closure in unfamiliar experience not yet apparent in
changing circumstances discontinuous brief and ephemeral
indistinguishable as spaces in unbounded places where gravity's lacking
melting moving and being still in a cluster of thoughts-from-the-beginning like clouds and sky and scattered sonance fading toward silence that may never come to pass
an indecisive tortoise

A masque of specificity impossible to hear as a thistle pricks and finds satisfaction
suffers no distinction between a dawn and an underfalling
saturated by lost-found choice no taste of a hint of stone
can still be retained or related to messages shaped by rushing water and billowing air practicing stillness quietly blindly the shadow's
rigorous eyes say nothing

Lately almost proclaims contingent escape consumed by symmetrical clouds
over a podium nice - sized for-an-eye-high-serial-fétishist
quick as a turner of coins among poisonous animals shy as goodbye
iterating blooms in window boxes green and orchid innuendoes of Paradise placed in shadows cast on a sleeve by moondust
bending toward being a thing

Turning and placed in an opening checking and balancing wealth
understood as being-told yes or no or both in an unknown proportion
blank as a dream of partial voices breaking in duration's wind
you enter a moonlit tangle of reliquaries naked and antithetical-as-dáwn in a scene of flags and butterflies where wounds are sewn together
in the harbor's unintelligible sheen

Pulled into wandering shambles stepping into a samurai's sword-edge
cartooned in brocaded snow upon a punctured season's shards
we wander in ancestors' dreams bequeathing us their avarice
defying spasmodically what-follows-what's-réal on the floor amid the silent boundaries of glossy claws and elegies
in shiny sanctuaries

Paintings of firestorms darkened by charring salts leave meretricious ashes
on surfaces of poured-out shirts and bondage's sugary stops
unblocked by instructions from a derelict circular book
categorically gone as soon as you ask if the chair is frail merely an artifact claimed by a plain in the missing ages
an incendiary stitched magnolia

Heavy water edges encourage rattling gossips already too courageous
unbearably chosen by skinless angels aiming at verity undermining likenesses
wrecking facticity hardly unwittingly luring to being unstable concretions
rosy as remembered prosy dawns debunked and tenuous taking the half-baked cake that fitfully crumbles contours dissolve
absent as slept-over prayers

Labyrinthine latitudes are soaped by vernacular adventures
brought together in castles burning as hands lie on the
    sidewalk
actualizing might-bes when the night pluralizes partial
    congrúence
where theorizing stevedores roused from inspiriting beds
    favor reading the poems out loud to bring themselves
    back to the point between
recognized regret and another day

Caesural spaces = durations of silence and/or
prolongations of final phonemes or syllables:
4 letter spaces [ ] = 1 unstressed syllable;
8 letter spaces [ ] = 1 stressed syllable or beat;
none occurs between typographical lines.

Nonorthographic acute accents indicate stress rather than vowel quality. Each hyphenated compound is read as one extended word: somewhat more rapidly than other words, but never hurried. Spaced hyphens [-] indicate slowed-down compounds. Indented typographical lines continue verse lines begun above them. Breath pauses at verse-line endings ad lib.

New York: 12 May 1994; 10 - 22 May, 25 July 1997

LINH DINH

THREE POEMS

MY RISING PROSPECTS

Surely, among dream mammals,
Among man-apes, among ape-apes, among man-men,
Among tasselled, scrubbed, prospecting for hubbub,
Among chyme-free duodena and lipsticked flour,
Among synchronized twitches and applauded pillows.
Thus embraced and mutilated, in my 34th year,
With my dukes up, with my grammar up,
With my legions of fish lips, stapled
To the inner ears, loquacious, murmurring,
With my musical toes and symphonic molars,
With my squatting rights about to be revoked,
"Where are you from? And why are you here?"
With my nose bleeding, with my menarche,
With my mud nap on the hour,
With my rising prospects and descending testicles.

TRIBAL HISTORY

We are born of the snake.
Some say from the behind of the snake,
Others say from the head of the snake,
But I say from the side of the snake.

About the only thing we can agree upon is
One hundred snake eggs hatched one hundred men.

We have scaly, flaky skin,
Maybe psoriasis, maybe skin cancer.
We spend an inordinate amount of timer
Five hours a day, rubbing lotion on our open sores.

And if not for the derogatory drum beats,
None of us would be here, of course,
Scattered like this, all over the globe.

In moments of repose, we often rail against each other,
With tremendous violence, Who?! Who?!
Who among you are truly famous?!!

Not that one, we would snicker,
The one who walked into the ocean at dusk,
Strumming his symphysis with a scissor,
Nor the one who tilted his coccyx forward,
Trying to untwist his colon.

What we are are specialists
In mild congenital defects
And gross sartorial blunders.

We are a wet tribe, yet smooth,
None of us can claim to be a psychotic innovator.
The best among us have learned to strut backward in circles,
Chanting up to twelve.

WHOAAAA!!!

And now, for our first ride on the bus!
What communal happiness. What blessings!
Everyone going the same way!
Whoaaaa!!! Get away from me!!!
What fumbling speed!
Ruminant, tragic. Look!!!
Look how we can see the top of everyone's head!!!
And now, for our first skyscraper!
So. . .shiny! Sooooo. . .straight up!!!
What balance! What splendor!
This. . .this. . .this. . .
This straight-up-ness!!! Hush!
And now, for our first girl on roller skates!
Arrrghh!!! What unspeakable joy! Must we?
Boo hoo hoo! Boo hoo hoo!
I think we must kill ourselves!!!
And now, for our first toothpick!
Can I have this? Waaaa!!!!!
Is it mine? Ha ha ha!!!! For real?
For our first cornflake! For our first coffin!!!
Custom-made, no ordinary pine, a fine wood. . .
With what anguish must we receive each thing?
With what rage? With what gratitude?

DANIEL MOORE

TESTOSTERONE ART

Every man's house is on fire;
the halls in our dreams are tunnels of smoke.
Exhaling the euphoric residue of sex, we
search for the pillow's coldest side.

The alarm clock rings and *Night's* dead river
drifts towards a burning sea. Our feet
hit the floor, muscles twitch, we skip through the flames
to the toilet's seat and roll back the bladder's
darkening sky, releasing the napalm storm.

The smell of fresh coffee hangs in the air,
offering direction to the charred and erect.
Kitchen counters glow with a Nagasaki blush,
a guiltless attempt at testosterone art.

As cup after cup of liquid Brazil
saturates our bloodshot eyes, we notice
we're naked and dreadfully awake
to our mind's most closeted question;

"What should we wear, what would look good
in this oven called life, set against
the backdrop of well endowed women
lighting our next cigarette?"

J. GALLAHER

THE ATTRACTIONS OF THE ATTRACTIVE

1

They're attending the grass
where the sidewalk

joins, and attending the several
doings of day, the aquamarine, the swing

set and exigency. (the domain and mnemonics)
Piecing

the park together, a sequence
of dears, whence and whither,

serpentine
in apposition. And the pleasures dally

in the arbor, the half world
in dollops, egg and dart (the acclivity,
declivity).

2

The colored balloons go off
at once

and the blues and the reds
and the yellows go off

a priori in April. Without apologies,
doddering for this

and that, exeunt
severally, the colored balloons.

The apricots the redolent
bristling with ardor,

of equilibrium at their apogee,
attendants in light,

go off. Categorical and stacking
as the plethora as the quorum

as the lullaby halve
the surface and the straining,

the epistle the firmament go
in April in Appertain.

3

A search has commenced
behind
the one counting

by ones. Little bodies scattering, busy,
the yard spreading

all around. And one says look

and they all look
saying up saying up

with a certain flavor
(carrot grass, mint leaf).

And the bodies in light
turn in the grass

each parallax.

Busy no bulwark on my republic
busy no coterie on yours.

JEAN-PAUL AUXEMÉRY

from MY JAZZ

(Tr. from the French
by Richard Sieburth)

I

fear of having charted out only the chords,
but wanting furiously to proceed

(sounds that be
pure, extreme evidences

(possibilities
no chord could oblige or seize

(lines of necessity
w/o parallel w/o precedent

(no holds barred
no unsettled scores

at last, alone; the octave's entire span of sound,
within the sole limits of my desire's advance
in the knowledge of this identity:

form giving birth to form,
movement rushing forward,

& form-as-child:
building on thin air
the texture of a breath, a child
a small child fingering her flute

a figure in full, armed with meaning
which each moment models & modifies
& accomplishes & completes & undoes & repeats

–a fugue, a force, a thrill

a river, my child, my fear

at last defined, at last

set free

John Coltrane, giant prints

II

(tells it like
(tells it like it
(tells it like it is:

get hip, get down–cross to the other side,
get into the sound, into the stride &

be nothing, say nothing but the burn,
the blues, the gist–get down, get down,

cross over, & plunge–go, go, go
stand up to the stares, go face

the monsters & masters lying in wait
waiting to gnaw on your pain,

cross the river, deliver your curses
& low-down fables–go sing, jeer, defy:

this spurt of blood—this depth of drink—these dogs
that howl & lick—the benediction of their teeth—

& you give in to the whirl, exact in your trance,
gifted with sight, prostituted, flamed, nourished on
[night,

taking on life with gleeful aggravation, saying no,
telling it like it is, no jive, no excuses:

drive this into the hollows of our soul—the fingers
of the drowned slithering along the boat,
the eyes of the lynched laughing at the fires

pluck your muffled bass go get stoned

tell it like you know tell it like it frees

Charles Mingus, passage beyond

RACHEL BLAU DUPLESSIS

HAIBUN: "DRAW YOUR/ DRAFT"

Her books were there on my shelf, waiting for me to attend; I had bought them, but I didn't read them. Grove and ND. The cover of *Bid Me To Live* a photo taken at a vertiginous angle. Of a blank space. Telling the book by its cover. Telling a woman's book by the cover. The surface. (But it was not blank; it was a photo of military monuments. Could I see?) The moment not heroic, but compliant, with hardly an undercurrent of resistance. Just the fact that I had bought her books, some kind of declaration. The vertigo of acceding to something called "woman"–the danger of it. *Helen in Egypt* looked too "neat," too "centered"–I was, instead, challenging myself with the all-over page space collage works of Williams *(Paterson)* and Pound *(The Cantos).* This date is 1965 through 1974. I have (1968) read *The H.D. Book* chapters in *Caterpillar*, in *Coyote's Journal,* in *Stony Brook.* Robert Duncan is my first path to H.D., for he made a heterodox modernism with women's work and men's intermingled, counter to any version the university or the general literate culture proposed. Getting something of that "feminine" associative build and the insoucient resistance to convention via a (gay) man. Shock, scandal, pleasure. And his essay form–the form of thinking, himself indebted to her, so that in hearing his essay with a wild alertness, I was also beginning to hear H.D. The essays I have written first occurred under the sign of Duncan's *H.D. Book:* his work and Woolf's, Rich's and then H.D.'s tipped me into that tonality of consideration, the burst of vectored thought, the feeling analysis. I heard it first there, and then I did it, and still do.

During my Columbia Ph.D. oral examination in–was it 1966 or 1967, I spoke about Williams' *Spring and All,* a work no one (I ever knew) had read, written by a poet almost totally discounted. I also spoke critically about Dorothy Wordsworth's position as a conduit for the imagination of her brother, the cultural meaning of the female figure in "Tintern

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Prepared for *No Rule of Procedure: H.D. and Poets After,* ed. Donna Hollenberg, University of Iowa Press. [1]

Abbey." I had never heard anyone saying the things that were coming out of my mouth.

> Prima Donna Illusion
> the dreamed dreamer
> my silhouette, sleep, swirled like a silver streamer
> the stage is swept with shards.

At a peculiar location. I heard the New American poetry through the Donald Allen anthology, and I listened at a place where Olson, Duncan, Creeley and also *Caterpillar* (edited by Clayton Eshleman) existed, but I didn't search for any personal bond. On the other hand, with much personal and intellectual bonding, I connected to the Objectivists, primarily to George Oppen. Oppen and I met and engaged with each other from August 1965; I think of him and his work insistently (he died in 1984). He is central to my sense of the seriousness and scrupulousness of poetry, and he influenced my knowledge of the poetic career: exilic, nomadic, working out of a marginal place into both the leverage of marginality and sense of centrality, building himself an oeuvre in twenty-five years of intense work. These forces in poetry and poetics (all loosely Poundean and Williams-y) met the loose professional complacencies of the university as institution, in which there were a history, a library, a site of enterprise but no real or consistent training, certainly not for women. I never went downtown, kept to a little poetry group on 100th Street. In 1968, the radical liberatory thinking of civil rights and anti-war analyses contributed to the beginnings of a feminist movement in which I was abruptly immersed to my fibers. After a first flurry of activity, I went to France for several years (1970-72) and had to invent a feminist cultural position for myself, without immediate peers or interlocutors. Isolation is a motif. There is also no doubt I was afraid of the gift.

> hooded woman, black coat
> rigid in an
> anxious walking context
> I expect her to howl
>
> falling into the well of swallowing herself

During the early period of my (particular/peculiar) poetic career (1963 forward) I was very good at inventing blockages. I was always writing the long poem: before 1968, I had written good works: a serial poem called "The War Years," a long sequence called "Villa d'Este Staten

Island," and a serial work that was really about gender, beginning "Train journey and/ journey by water. . .," yet there were no ways for me to understand in my head what my subject was telling me, nor ways to move into a real poetic career. During the time I was writing my gnarled-up dissertation (on Pound and Williams, called *The Endless Poem),* I diminished to three line, one line poems. The fragment is not inconsistent with the urge to seriality, of course, but this felt like the end of my poetry. I remember with great gratitude George Oppen looking at this work (and at this situation) and saying "Well, a good one line poem, that's not nothing." It now grieves (and almost frightens) me how many opportunities I missed, how wayward was my path, how divided I was, how underutilized (how I understood little or nothing of what I actually could do)—especially in the mid-1960s when some of my age cohort were publishing, even with trade presses. I was the Pokey Little Puppy. Now isn't that cute. And ain't it a shame. It's good I've lived as long as I have, even so. Any work is in part shaped by luck. The luck of being here.

> One cannot sweep with shards.
> But they do mark.

Yet still during the early and mid 70s, there was more blockage, or, rather, the invention of a certain structure of resistance. No easy way to say this, it seems so scrupulously (undercutting). The question of beauty. I didn't want beauty in my poetry: any hint was an invitation to a slippery slope of the feminine. The poetry of the death of the beautiful woman was the death of the woman writing. The death of the poet in the poetess. Of course, this became a subject of some of my literary criticism. I am so stubborn about this structure of feeling that, even now, I have much suspicion of the triumphant investiture of awe and blessing in female figures by culture and cultural products—from Dante to Breton and beyond. This is a serious blind spot as well as part of my critical advantage. That's why I now love Lyn Hejinian's wry, recognizing line (from section—that is, age—26 of *My Life)* "The Muses are little female fellows." It takes that whole structure of feeling and flicks it away at about the same age-time as I also confronted the situation of woman writing.

So I tried *not* to write beauty (and images, and sonority), but to write language, to write syntax. Or to compose a beauty so hard and selective as to contain its presence. This urge has analogues with early H.D., but I "got it" via the Objectivists and Pound. An unintended consequence: my poetry could not be fluid, fluent, it could only stop and start. It was

so angry about rhetorics—these are the years before *Wells* (that is before 1980), and just after. This explains why my first book was about 15 years late. I was writing the lyric, yet increasingly I did not want the perfection of lyric, the separation of lyric, the selectivity of lyric, the purity of lyric. This is surely a contradiction. Thus my allegiance to the Objectivist purities, because they offered some way of skepticism and quasi-refusal, some method of documentary.

blank-bud book
not even certain
which way to o-
pen it.

In 1973-74: I wrote "Eurydice," a poem (like its companion "Medusa") out of an early feminist critique of culture—a redirection of mythoposeis: telling the "other side." The gender binarism was an important invention of the time, for it allowed us to bring women as a socially formed group up to concerted scrutiny. My sense of the potential of feminist critique was imagining the whole world differently, the reinvention of culture. There was a growing context for this thinking—an explosion of investigations and poetries. Adrienne Rich was a very important ethical and intellectual figure in this feminist effervesence. It was no accident that my work was about the opposite of the imprint of the poet-Orpheus, about the one who, in my version, chooses to go back underground. Only after I had completed "Eurydice" did someone tell me about H.D.'s poem called "Eurydice." This was a talismatic moment of connection between myself and H.D. Because I had written my poem, I suddenly could read and recognize her poem and her project: it became legible. I understood that we were involved in parallel studies of the position of the female figure in culture. The intertwined turn of reading and writing, the reading of the writing created a bond between this poetic mind and my own, a spiral of recognition. Without exaggeration, one might say that moment opened my poetry as it opened my literary criticism and my essays. H.D. was enabling for my poetic career.

"I needed a woman, a poet, and a modernist and I needed her badly." (This from my "Reader, I Married Me.") H.D. was this figure.

"What, then, must a woman do with the reactionary sexual ideology of high art?" Gayatri Spivack, *Social Text* 3 (1980)

I wanted to start modernism again, all over, from the beginning.

> "finally a woman on paper"
> "I'll paint it big"
> "with flowers on my flower"
> "I brought home the bleached bones"
>
> (O'Keeffe)

The revendicatory. The reassessment. The reconsideration. Had this person ever been read before? A few now read H.D. voraciously. I heard Susan Stanford Friedman talk about H.D., read SSF's first work (in 1975), bonded with her. The confrontation she postulated between H.D. and Freud—the deep intellectual and spiritual engagement and the deep resistance—resonated with my relations to (loosely) the patriarchs. Feminist thinking about literary texts vibrated with questions about myth (that is, the spiritual and ideological stories culture tells to announce, investigate and explain itself). It resonated with questions about the nature of the poetic career for women, with ideas about production, dissemination, reception, with materialist scrutiny of the ideologies and insititutions that organize the poetic career and the reception of individuals.

So first off, it's not so much the influence of H.D. on me, but (don't get me wrong) my influence on H.D. (In a few years, she reciprocated.) This peculiar position is true of several other feminist critics who wrote on H.D. very early—around 1979 and for a few years after: Susan Stanford Friedman, Adalaide Morris, Lucy Freibert, myself (and with different agendas, Susan Gubar)—and other feminist poets or poet critics—Alicia Ostriker, Beverly Dahlen, Adrienne Rich, and then Barbara Guest. These people in some ways worked on, worked out, and worked out of H.D. to accomplish the very, very first years of her rediscovery. We were inventing H.D. We influenced her work—how it was read, what parts of it were read, why it was interesting. We made it matter for this generation. It is astonishing to make this claim, yet is it simply true. Not arrogant; it is a statement of fact, the fact of our reading of H.D. and our engagements.

But it is odd: wasn't she there before? weren't there a few books in print? hadn't I been blind to her, too, and once compliant to reject her? Later there would be criticisms and modifications of our critical work, extensions and reassessments of our work, maybe even the (un)motivated disparagements—but our work putting H.D. forward as a twentieth century poet of grandeur is there in its commitment and its

subtlety—quite the opposite of crudeness. Yet, as I've already suggested, it's not as if no one had noticed before—both Robert Duncan and Lawrence Dembo had, Vincent Quinn and Joseph Riddel had, Norman Holmes Pearson had, Denise Levertov had. And they knew the H.D. of majority. But this critical situation is the story of a conjuncture. Here were the components: feminism in general; plus an uncontestably "major" woman writer (so none of us had to fight the paradigms of major/ minor right away and change other imbedded mechanisms of critical recognition); with an audience ready to understand that [patriarchal] structures of recognition had blocked and filtered our vision of her career, as they had intervened and been a condition of her employment and her own self-scrutiny for many, many decades. She was a big dolphin ridden by desirous feminists who needed to find her and to be buoyed in her ocean of texts. And she was a haunting presence: we had conjured her; she had conjured us. *Dux femina facti.*

> Levitation (leviathan)
> I am smelling my own bread
> rising
> stepping out over air eyes, walking
> over the water and into swimming—this
> kind of statement is
> happening in the present
> participle.

Reading the then-unpublished *HERmione*, reading *The Gift* at the Beinecke Library where H.D.'s manuscripts were housed (in fact, eventually helping to provoke their publication as books), like a train I was riding, speeding the tracks: clacked this is good, this is good, this is really really good. Her whole work was answering questions we had just begun to formulate; we were hot with it, and in that heat H.D. emerged, like a secret writing that could be read when it got hot-light enough. We had sought the story of modern female cultural position, the portrait of the artist as a struggling and investigative woman. We had sought women's contributions, women's intervention in the Western cultural compact. At every moment that the bucket went down into her vast and capacious oeuvre, it came up full, full, full. That metaphor suggests that we still need the theoretical (that is ideological) capacity to understand the matter of Mater—the "matriarchal" figure standing at the wellsprings of cultural generation. Was it Irigaray who told us about a real second sex? about the despisal of and desire for the Mother? It was also H.D., with her grand psychoanalysis of culture and society. We found a magisterial work, intense and passionate in the

most nuanced turns of language, austere in its knowledge of the past, and fierce in the will to interpret modernity. Reading, teaching *Trilogy, Helen in Egypt,* the short poems, some of the novels as I did beginning in the mid-1970s through to now, the 1990s—one can also use the archeological metaphors that H.D. would, perhaps, have appreciated. We had started with a shard, a scrap, a mark on a piece of stone or papyrus: we had ended by commencing a multi-generational dig at an enormous city-temple complex. We had opened [Queen Tut's] tomb.

> such *avis* in dreams
> do the strange-handed "draw" or "read" the lines?
> ombre'd on rich *rive'n* rock

Working on mss. The trace, the feeling, the mark of her on the page. Not hero worship, the question of evidence of being. Of negotiating inside the pressure of detail. Open the boxes. Hatchlings. Open the cardboard hutch of archival acid-free boxes. I am sitting in a library staring at the white underground sculpture court of Noguchi and on the plaza outside the monuments to Yale men killed in the Great Wars. The floor was carpeted; the tables were large and solid. The chairs were elegant and capacious. A portrait of Gertrude Stein hung on the wall to the ladies room. It was luxury, the luxe, calme, volupté of supported work. Open the trunk. Reading H.D. letters: gender and sexuality emerge everywhere into the deep desire to search for response, to give response: H.D. eroticizes the reader. The erotic radiance and the pleasure of finding, knowing, unveiling, being absorbed, being nourished, being taught, reading—like food—breathless. She was aware of the power and necessity of those archives. Indeed, one of the works of her later years was to arrange them, to organize them, and once again to consider her own career in one of the most brilliant essays she wrote— "H.D. by Delia Alton." She exercised Control (as all poets do). Her voracity and control.

The facts and activities of this rediscovery had a deep influence on my sense of the complexity of female cultural position, and the ways one must investigate it historically, situationally, biographically. Susan Friedman and I together at Yale doing H.D. research in 1983 met Susan Howe and argued over feminist criticism; SH is incensed at *The Madwoman in the Attic,* especially the portrait of Dickinson; SH hated any notion that the female writer is a "victim." She was prescient about a damaging aspect of contemporary feminism. I defend not so much that melodramatic book, though it had its deep necessity, but the complexity of the impulses to feminist criticism, the many textures and

methods that are possible within it, including a materialist and situated notion of the poetic career: class does matter, the particularities of gender and sexuality do matter. I also defend agency. H.D. and feminism, and the rush of interpretations and passionate debates about women in culture—this marked the moment. What I still see is that it is crucial to maintain feminist reception (and indeed, to reject particular, limiting, infuriating demands of any theme or style for female production). I brought to H.D., evoked in H.D. a sense of her agency and desire, of the need for poesis; I saw her complex negotiations with ambition, how she went Working on the Work of the Gift. It was, as I said, the career of that struggle.

> Demeter statue
> carrying a pig.
> Nike, very fluid.
> Koré, the thin folds.
>
> Running in a forest of papyrus
>
> how can the rose speak?
> so to speak—rewrite the rose.
>
> "Peut on faire des oeuvres
> qui ne soient pas 'd'art'?"
>
> (Picabia)

After *Wells* (1980), I had begun to write "The 'History of Poetry'"—a way of harrying and leveraging the lyric tradition (this work is in *Tabula Rosa*, 1987). It became my position of angry/ hungry—as *per* the text called "Crowbar" which was written as a fierce critique of "trobar" treatments of the female figure. After "For the Etruscans" (1979-80), my next essay (1979) was the one on H.D.—"family, sexes, psyche." And I composed the book *H.D.: The Career of that Struggle* about the four kinds of authority of the woman writer. In 1986, after a significant serial poem called "Writing" (1984-85), itself linked to an early version of the essay on Williams and others called *"Pater*-daughter," I began writing *Drafts,* a long poem in autonomous "canto-like" linked sections. As we pass into 1998, it is in its twelfth year.

In the historical narrative of beginning *Drafts,* H.D. was one of the central figures of the opening—along with several others: Beverly Dahlen's *A Reading* (and my 1985 essay on Dahlen, in *The Pink Guitar),* my daughter Koré (arrived in 1984), and George Oppen, who

had died in 1984. I finished copyediting *H.D.: The Career of that Struggle* in Nijmegen in the autumn of 1985 for publication in the next year, the centennial of H.D.'s birth, and I also began the essay "Language Acquisition" (written in 1985, as was "Otherhow"). In it there are little chapters and textual multiplicity: theory, poem, analysis, baby babble, documentary, even picture—the hieroglyphic of Isis. It is a work clearly written under the simultaneous regimes of Koré's learning to talk, Kristevean analysis of the pulse of poetic language, and H.D.'s essays and her deep investigative sounds and soundings. One agenda was to examine H.D.'s "midrash"-like quality of continuous chains of interpretation where there is no closure and no authoritative statement, but where the production and productivity of meanings is continuous. The interest in child language acquisition is also indebted to Mary Kelley's "Post-Partum Document"—a conceptual work that had a lot of impact on me, and that also influenced the pre-Drafts serial poem "Writing."

> "pinkie"
> "tow"
> "cookie"
> are Dutch words in English we know

In 1985 and 1986, I began to imagine how to exit and encircle all that limited me; and I saw that it was a gigantic project/ prospect. The invention of a stance capacious, ready, open-throated, alert and altered, serious. A voiced text that could play with, and beyond, all the features of poetry that I had resisted. Sonority. Metaphor. Even beauty. I didn't feel exiled from language but from the conventions of poetic discourses, from the construction of what is called "poetry" by our culture, and from my gender position within those discourses. In April 1986, I was (finally) developing a changed relationship to the blank page.

> so that
> so that the point of this argument
> is
> To stop writing
> 'poetry' (and)
> draft, draw
>
> Take the razor point fine tip
> & draw it all over the page

draw it
makes drafts

In summer 1986, at the conference in Orono, Maine for H.D.'s centennial, I uncharacteristically stopped listening to my fellow critics, and wrote in a journal:

put yr hand down
on the paper & draw your
draft for the most thirsty self s.

The moment had begun. It continued in San Diego, after the conference on George Oppen and some study in the Archive for New Poetry where Oppen's papers were housed, for I was also working on *The Selected Letters of George Oppen* which would be published in 1990. I sketched "Draft 1: It" (without knowing quite what it was, yet), by following the instruction to

write
writings
that.

all the materials ARE there here
the ocean changed to lines

I worked into the page that had called me. I knew that I had begun a long poem in "cantos" but was sure of no more than that. The first two poems of *Drafts* emerged together and were separated during the summer of 1986. I knew, from all my struggles before this, that one central impulse of "Drafts" was the critique of the lyric. What I felt in July 1986 is how the critique and the temptation occur simultaneously, for I wrote "Afterimage" at the same time as writing "Draft 1: It." But "Afterimage" was (so far as I can reckon) my last lyric poem. Instead I was seeking the authority of the multiple. Willing to follow the track of making. And to think about the implications of the poesis as furthering. To read the writing. But a cultural project—making something of extent. Casting myself into that sea. No matter what one touches, the ongoingness of language demands more writing.[2]

No plan, no design, no schemata. Just a few procedures: placing works on the big stage of the page, making each be itself intact and autonomous, but connected to themselves as they emerged. No continuous narrative. No myth as explanation. Here *Drafts* are very different from

H.D.'s long poems; and quite related to Objectivist ethos and poetics. The works are influenced by objectivist argument and propositions about reality. That the image is encountered, not found, as Oppen proposed. That *the* and *a* (said Zukofsky testily) are words worth investigating, as suggestive and as staggering in their implications as any epic or myth.

Draft. 1) current of air in an enclosed area 2) pull or traction of a load/ that which is pulled/ traction power 3) depth of a vessel's keel 4) heavy demand upon resources 5) document or instrument for transferring money 6) gulp, swallow, inhalation/ a measured portion or dose 7) drawing of liquid from a keg 8) selection of personnel/ conscription 9) drawing in of a net 10) preliminary outline or plan of a document or picture 11) a narrow line chiseled on a stone to guide the mason in leveling the surface 12) a slight taper given a die to ease the removal of a casting 13) an allowance made for loss in weight of merchandise

full & empty
the more marks
the larger emptiness

generative

One first idea about "Drafts" was that they pretend to be informal, "unfinished"—that is self-questioning and processual, a rhetorical texture one might describe as a flow of interruption across a surface. Another idea was they pretend to be real "drafts"—that is certain lines, images or materials can be (as if) provisionally placed at a number of different positions. Hence certain lines or phrases repeat across poems. This tactic is central and continues. Another part of the idea of "drafts" is the interest in marks or marking. I had a number of textual markers in early drafts. The instruction "CUT" that begins "Draft 3: Of" created the predictable difficulties when the book *Drafts (3-14)* (1991) went to the printer.

At a certain point in this exploration of the rhetorics of "drafting," I realized that I was constructing a texture of déjà vu, a set of works that mimicked the productions and losses of memory. And that the works were my own response both to the memorializing function of poetry and to my own bad memory. "An exploration of the chaos of memory (obscured, alienated, or reduced to a range of natural references) cannot be done in the 'clarity' of a linear narrative." (Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, 107) Bad memory. Bad dog. Bad

bad memory. The poem replicates (but neither reconstructs nor represents) a space of memory.

I am no one to say. When I began *Drafts*, I thought of it as "an endless poem of no known category all about everything." My way of interpreting the no known category (which for Pound and Williams was the encylopedic poem; the citation is Pound's) was a kind of playful heterogenerity. For instance, the poem sounds off against the "meditative derivative" while its little feet are stuck in precisely that tar. But the midrashic is extremely important as a genre: the continuous practice of examination, gloss, and reinterpretation. This draws upon H.D., upon Freud, and upon a tradition of Hebrew textuality all at once. Once the line or word or turn of phrase is stated, once the material exists as the stuff of language (and means what it claims to mean), any particle can open out to more. The generative principles of *Drafts* are repetition, recontextualization, reconsideration, returns that are not returns to the same. The "same/ different"—of *Helen in Egypt*—is different than before; never quite the same as before. Sometimes H.D. knows this, but to claim that nothing was ever lost, or that it would recur —to me that was mysticism, and I parted intellectual company with H.D. over the issue of "origins" and recovery.

The texture of commentary and gloss led me to composition by fold. At a certain point (around "Draft 19: Working Conditions" in 1993), the sheer construction of the linear repeats seemed inadequate, and I decided to make the poems fold over each other. In some sense, even a minor sense, or an allusive sense, a donor draft (such as "Draft 4: In") generates some relationship with its counterpart (in this case, "Draft 23: Findings"). The periodicity is 19. "The long poem, then is a rereading of writings, a rewriting of readings." (Smaro Kamboureli. *On the Edge of Genre: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem*, 99)

H.D. looked at her own files. H.D. reworked elements of her life and her mythoi over and over. Studied the traces. If a photo was blurred, there was a reason. If a line was made, it could be understood and reinterpreted. A Freudian poetics: that there is no wasted mark, no unmotivated gesture. Reading the reading was writing the writing. Not just talking the talk, but walking the walk. Not just reading the written but writing the wrote. Not the rote. That's how if first felt, when one could reject it—resist H.D. But it was not rote but road. Ever enough rope. In her method was pleasure and also obsession, "obsessing," as we say, hissing sounds like an airlock. The film was run, rerun, spliced, reshot. Palimpsested, so that scrim-films of one picture is superimposed,

underposed. Taking what you are given (she was given a lot, but a lot was taken also) and mulling it.

> Shimmer spectra of intercut;
> waves rays way
> the page is never blank

I must say her ear, her ear, her magnificent Ear, the subtle netting of phonemes across her poems. The way a sound map of H. D. can be revelatory of subplots of sound, of pool words into which important phonemes gather and are held, of the tone-leading so phonemes and sound-clusters track each other and are caught up, split, and engage again. The sound—it was not "beauty" as a limit term, but the language leading itself to more language. Thus the issue of "beauty" could be encircled and pincered off by the fullness of, the tremendousness of sound. This I feel I follow and I want to follow.

There is, inter alia, in all the *Drafts* a good deal of "debris" and "fragment," and this is often provoked by a sense of twentieth-century history, including the Holocaust. Thus the poem has come to recognize in itself a Jewishness of theme and of textuality. It is focused by Walter Benjamin's paradoxical and painful figures, but not necessarily influenced by them beforehand: the angel of history, the sense of a displacement in the storm blowing him backwards into the future, while he is still staring stunned at history and its unfixable debris. Failing memory, strange memory, lost memory, construction of memory. Being haunted. At a further remove than many, still I am haunted by the loss of people, the moral nightmare, the randomness, haunted by the ability at which this century has excelled, several times, to exterminate a group, by the loss of cultures of Jewishness, the loss of languages, the loss of those who might have been. I am haunted by a sense of the ones who are not. Their shadow or the stain of them. A sense of ghosts, but ghosts who do not even declare themselves. I do recognize that this situation is something H.D. also entered. Abraham and Torok's "transgenerational phantom" may explain why someone like myself, two generations removed from direct and intimate ties to European Jewry, speaks a poetry haunted by the ghosts of ghosts.

Drafts have a "midrashic" element: that means the generative processes of continuous re-reading and marking. The poetry works by the endless elaboration of a practice of gloss, including self-gloss. The impulse to analysis, and doubled, redoubled commentary. There is a good deal of "debris" and "fragment"—let's call it a creolized Jewishness.

Writing (by study and certainly by authority claims) commentary adequate to the text that has been set, on which there are many prior comments. The concentration on (the concatination of) the small—the detail of the letter. Yod. Any tiny mark. Any thing can open out to meaning and be connected to other things. The way a toddler will pick up a speck of dust. Every detail could in a particular light have meaning. Error has meaning. Slip has meaning. Anything could be glossed. Gloss generates more text. Text and gloss exist in a permanent, continuous, generative relationship. Gloss on text is more text to be glossed. One makes gloss to comment on loss, against the loss of loss, but there is always more loss. "Even the loss is lost." Preserving has its antonym. Every dot cannot open for every one, but after many years on task I could finally say : I found the opening and I wrote into it.

> Think of the tit
> The tit and the title
> and the entitlement
> think of the jot and tittle.

Drafts construct the space of memory; they also face the breast of the mother. They bring back the cut-off breast of the mother: a work of fake restoration, of impossible milk. The hidden maternal presence: the gift which is also poison ("gift" is poison in German, she says in *The Gift)* have analogues with H.D. My mother died of cancer of the breast in May 1990; ten days after, Mary Oppen died. My mother's pre-death words of bemusement and anger occur in "Draft X: Letters." (And my father had already died, in December of 1986. His death is spoken of in "Draft 5: Gap" and "Draft 6: Midrush." Elegy, and not simply for two people, is a part of what the poem concerns.)

"Feminist critique is not pure absolute negativity but rather historically conscious negation." Teresa de Lauretis.

The poem is a letter, a stranger (a low flame on the grate in Coleridge's conversation poems). It is a folding over in time, of time at the mercy of its thinking. And the thoughtlessness of time.

> Memory is dissolved.
> "Plenty of debris.
> Plenty of smudges."
>
> (WCW to LZ, *Selected Letters,* 94)

"Writing is a [daily] task, and the temporal demands of the work are a part of its argument with existence. . . . The querying of language by language in time is the method." (Barrett Watten, *Total Syntax,* 103)

The poetics of Mass Observation (in which H.D.—astonishingly—briefly participated, writing about the coronation of George VI in 1937) became important to me as a democratic ethics of invested examination. What is it like to live through the texture of our days. What is it, like? There is always a documentary aspect to my poetics. Trying to live in historical time and give some testimony, to bear some (direct or indirect) witness. This means bringing the unspeakable into words, or at the endge of words. Leaving it be mystery, but now in words.

Even the tiniest mark, even down to the tiniest mark; it is "through-composed." And

> documentation of the art
> object that is the art
> object
> is Duchamp
>
> The Large Glass cracks
> ill-packed from Brooklyn
> and it is all absorbed into itself
> trucked
> a turn, a term of its placefulness

The hero of the poem—without a hero. "not hero, not polis, not story, but it," ("Draft 15: Little") "It" speaks.

I cited Virgil. Cano. Arms and the man cano. "CANO, can o yes no/ conno-/ tations of impurities fill the fold." ("Draft I: It") Motive for me from the very beginning. All the Can's and Can no's, and the way I used to Freudian-slip the Cantos (into Canots) while writing my dissertation. Arma virumque cano. H.D. meditates this passage in her work *Paint It To-Day* (1920). I felt kinship, kindship: another link, among the many that set me going.

> that bilingual
> hip-hop talk
> a creature/ écriture's
> langdscape
> of anguage

I wanted exodus, the ex-odic, watchfulness into departures. H.D. wanted to return to plenitude, postulated as origins. I quarrel with the non-presence. "El" and the loss of L means oss, a bony site. She builds a space in which presence can reemerge. I want (and this from J-F Lyotard, painfully) "the forgotten never part of memory": "a demand for a form of thinking and writing that do not 'forget the fact' of the forgotten and the unrepresentable." *(Heidegger and 'the jews',* introduction)

I was convinced I had entered a letter and was travelling thru its uncontrollable tunnels.

This is the gift.

[December 30, 1997-January 1, 1998]

Notes

1. Haibun is a Japanese form of journey writing: prose passages interspersed with haiku. In great fondness for Cid Corman's translation of Basho's *Back Roads to Far Towns,* I composed "Draft 13: Haibun" in 1991. But the mix of prose and haiku-like objects also seemed appropriate to this account. I also follow the "hermetic" encoding in H.D. that involves an H and a D in titles that consider her. People interested in this account as a memoir of my practice might want to supplement it with "Reader, I Married Me: A Plygynous Memoir," in *Changing Subjects: The Making of Feminist Literary Criticism,* ed. Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn; Routledge, 1993; "Otherhow" and "For the Etruscans" in *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice;* Routledge, 1990; "On Drafts: a Memorandum of Understanding," in *Onwards,* ed. Peter Baker; Peter Lang, 1996 and "Manifests," *Diacritics* 26, 3 (1996); as well as with my essays on H.D.: "Family Sexes, Psyche: an essay on H.D. and the muse of the woman writer" and "Language Acquisition," both in *The Pink Guitar.* My books of poetry via Small Press Distribution, 1341 Seventh Street, Berkeley, CA 94710-1403.
2. If I were to track the origins of *Drafts* justly, I want to note that I was reading not only the modernists, but certain of my contemporaries: the HOW(ever) cohort: Bev Dahlen, Kathleen Fraser, Frances Jaffer, and some others at various times in the early-to-mid-80s and forward: Rae Armantrout, Michael Palmer, Robert Duncan, Ron Silliman, Susan Howe (about whom I also wrote), Bob Perelman, Robin Blaser, Charles Bernstein, Lyn Hejinian, Clayton Eshleman.

MICHAEL PALMER

TWO POEMS

SÃO PAULO SIGHS (AUTOBIOGRAPHY 14)

Lembras-te?
—Mário de Andrade

Our sighs in São Paulo
sounded something like this:

a kiss is just a kiss
be it rain or simply mist

The animal alphabet
passed overhead

with its twenty-three wings
rhythm-a-ning a samba for the dead

We walked and walked and we saw:
a rock star without his rock,

two pictures of a rose in the dark
We saw: the shorn locks of a nun

beside an abandoned well
and we peered into our porous hearts

where militiamen secretly dwell
We walked and walked, we three

the Professor of Everything,
the Professor of Nothing

and yours very truly
We witnessed:

the theoretical arrival
of the workers' paradise

by means of its statuary
We examined a woman's skeleton perfectly drawn

skeleton of everything,
skeleton of nothing

on a blue-lit barroom wall
and we noted the sun's

utter failure to explain
anything at all

regarding the mist and the rain
There's no cosmic close-out on raincoats

no discount on drizzles
so you must remember this

When São Paulo sighs
a kiss is just a kiss

for Régis Bonvicino

AND SIGHS AGAIN
(AUTOBIOGRAPHY 15)

A sea of small killings, invisibilities, precise
scents of night

in its wetness
its edges of bloom

and inflection
A woman, chestnut-fleshed, nipples erect, ascends a
kind of cross

Her companion, her double, her accomplice in this
helps her rise up with her tongue

Out of the dark they are fashioning a rose,
a window

They are examining the mathematics of the fold
They are baking themselves in salt

that we of little faith
may be saved

from the dampness and the dark
They are writing a book of common knowledge

a book of maxims and proverbs
such as a father

might pass on to a son
Did I say father and son

when I meant
farther and farther from the sun

Did I say fold
when I meant fault

salt when I meant song
dark when I meant a little bark

steering straight into the storm
Boat, little boat

with sail of stone,
Are you bearing an alphabet

among the rats in your hold,
an A-B-C-D of twinned bodies

Is the skin of this city your own,
city over which another city floats

skin of a retinal machine
salt sea of invisibilities

GWYN MCVAY

THE RED DRUM

: how to strike emptiness

Fly to the
o-daiko

your wing bone
its resonating
chamber

the *bu-*
tsu of two strokes

as if it meant your life : note
: I am here beating the red drum for you,

its ominous voice my lantern,
every highway reed a tower

: who dreamt, who knew, so loud

•

Around the beater one sees an aura of copper

A murder of crows feeds the fire,

round skin-roofed hut lit orange from inside
At every blow the impossible

: a rap of ghost roses, a shamisen
with nine strings, you so far

yet one of the chorus of drums,
the skeleton of the toothed ancestor bird
flying overhead
A crazy lady

voice like hours tells for the carrion
bird :
If the crop sac does not burst
we don't eat
If the ox's throat

was never slit what drumhead was struck?
A good one : if the tree topples
hollow what sound?
Every volcano-
deep word as if from iron mouth

•

The strength to strike
the o-daiko

bu-tsu, as if ringing the globe

"'ring of bone' where
ring is what a

bell does"
for one absent

as if striking emptiness
: taiko's finish vein-blood-

red, muscle of heart

RICHARD DEMING

HOW WE FIND OUR WAY

Some days even sunlight is to be challenged.
Doubted. As in looked

away *from.*
Where to find sustenance? Petitioning daily
the slack-jawed maws of effulgent toaster
ovens with dried-out bread heels.

Or a vesicle
forming
on the edge of the cervix like someone
mouthing
a whistle. What
sustains?

Recovering the body through
want's white
heat. Of where we are.
What was it you would say without
form, without limitation?
Invocation as a way of settling
matters.

An old lover
slits
the
palm
of her hand,
then presses

it against the bathroom mirror. The
flame-shaped

mark swallows her face. *What*
will
the neighbors say?
But then all stories are possibility. How we find
our way. All stories are consolation. A lovely parting
gift. Cells divide,
replicate,
die. Willow
branches bend low seeking out underground rivers and
[nothing adds up.

0-1-0. *Here* and *not here. Off/on.* Then this place
where destination is an oily red handkerchief, a
cobwebby John Deere Tractor cap. A curt *how*
did this happen. Anger fills a glass with cold milk.

Desire defines us: the long division of what
we want from unknowingness. But then all
algorithms are theoretical. And we fall
again, away—
from language, away from the longing

that form takes. A sycamore stands
suddenly up

at the edge of the yard. Already it's gone.
The record is scratched and the needle codas endlessly.

Oblivion becomes
the exegesis of silence. But is that a thing
to be believed? Night opens out like a rayon suitcoat.

Laws of substitution: blackberries are the exegesis,
no, the oblivion, no (how
far does *this* go?)—

blackberries are
silence.
Well what kind of proof is that?

Think of Andreas Vesalius the 16th c.
physician who'd rob graves for subjects to study.
He'd make engravings of flayed
cadavers hoisted into complex positions
by pulleys and levers. The need to know *(I had it in mind)*
muscles *(to suspend the body either)*
as the occiput is lifted back.
The unmediated arc of tendons *(with the head erect or*
[depressed. I placed
the longer end of the noose across)
taut and direct, *(a pulley fixed to a beam)*
facial cavities collecting each
vibration the day affords—*(and by that I drew*
the body, suspended, now higher,
now lower so that it might be turned)
the anatomy *(in every direction)*
(according to the tasks at hand) of supplication
and the form *(—De Humani*
Corporis Fabrica.) that vision takes.

Now we're
here
and what's to show
for it? In the age of late
capitalism Ariadne twines a hempen thread.
It frays.
It frays.

ALLEN S. WEISS

THE DEVIL IN THE BELLY

. . .Shall but one
Amongst these stupid drunkards
Dream, during his morbid nights,
Of creating, from wine, his shroud?
—Charles Baudelaire
"The Assassin's Wine"

He is beset by delusions of ruin and guilt. As a foreigner, now totally impoverished, he reproaches himself for not having taken out French citizenship, fearing this to be a serious crime. He anticipates a terrible punishment: a nail will be hammered into his head, and filth poured into his stomach; then he and the members of his family will be tortured, dismembered, and left exposed in a barren field. Finally, terribly mutilated, he will be led in a large procession to a fair and will be condemned to live until his death as a horrendous attraction in a cage with wild beasts.

> Accompanying these delusions of ruin, guilt, imminent punishment and persecution are interpretations of truly surprising extension. It is the "refuse policy," as he calls it, a policy which has been instituted especially for him. All the refuse, all the waste of the whole universe, is put aside for the purpose of being put into his stomach at some time. Everything is saved without exception. When someone smokes, there will be the ashes, the burnt match, and the cigarette stub. At meals he is preoccupied with crumbs, fruit pits, chicken bones, the water or wine that is left at the bottom of the glass. He says the egg is his worst enemy because of the shell; it is also the expression of the great anger of his persecutors. When someone sews, there are

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This text is excerpted from the author's *Flamme et festin: Une poétique de la cuisine* (Paris: Éditions Java, 1994).

> bits of thread and needles. All the matches, strings, bits of paper, and glass that he sees while walking in the street are meant for him. Then come nail parings, hair clippings, empty bottles, letters and envelopes, subway tickets, newspaper wrappings, dust brought in on people's shoes, bath water, kitchen garbage from all the restaurants in France, etc. Then it is rotten fruits and vegetables, cadavers of men and animals, the urine and feces of horses. When you talk about a clock, he says you are speaking of the hands, cogs, springs, case, weight, key, etc., all of which he will have to swallow. These interpretations bear on everything, absolutely everything, that he sees or imagines.[1]

This excessive and disquieting case history of a patient suffering from depressive psychosis is the antithesis of Kafka's hunger artist. Here—where the surreal devolves into the Kafkaesque, which in turn degenerates into the Ubuesque—it is as if, in a fit of paranoid megalomania, man the microcosm opened his mouth to reveal, in simultaneous punishment and revenge against the cosmos, an infinite black hole which would devour the macrocosm which he was to become. For what phantasm can be more primal than to devour the cosmos, like Zeus? What image is more poetic than an eater of stars? The imagination—be it quotidian, poetic or pathological—is but the ephemera of partial objects torn from culture and history, the transgression by fragmentation of a contemporary cosmos all too unified and all too controlled to admit the most singular, and idiosyncratic, phantasms of our desires. Food constitutes, par excellence, such assimilable, partial objects, such expendable objects of desire.

*

The conditions of gastronomy are often pushed to hyperbolic extremes. It is a sad state of affairs that now we are impressed, even if somewhat disgusted, by the tale of one of Balzac's gargantuan meals: during a business lunch, he managed to begin with 100 Ostende oysters, and then proceed to consume a dozen lamb chops, a duck with turnips, two roast partridges, a sole *normande,* and some fruit—all at the expense of his publisher Werdet, who wished to induce Balzac to sign a contract.

That Cleopatra dissolved, in order to devour, a pearl worth 6 million sesterces created a most costly show of conspicuous consumption, and established an eternal culinary myth—yet it did little to advance the quality of cuisine. In a reflection on the *exquisite* in

cuisine, M.F.K. Fisher decries this sort of culinary absurdity. Castigating those sorts of gourmands who would, out of sheer ostentation, serve entire platters of the tongues of birds who were first taught how to speak, she describes what would be a truly exquisite gesture:

> But what if one of those epicures, greatly in love with a proud lady named Livia, had taught a thousand birds to sing her name, Livia, Livia, to the moment of most perfect diction, and then had served forth to the lady a fine pie of their tongues, split, honeyed, and impaled on twigs of myrrh?[2]

Beyond a certain threshhold, the vulgar becomes sublime—but what does this have to do with cuisine? The inverse is no less disturbing. What does it mean to claim, as did Grimaud de la Reynière, in his *Itinéraire nutritif ou Promenade d'un gourmand dans divers quartiers de Paris,* that "The mustards of Maille are better known in the North than the verse of Racine"?

*

Suetonius, in *The Twelve Caesars,* informs us that the ruling vices of the Roman Emperor Vitellius were gluttony and cruelty, in that order. Vitellius would snatch pieces of meat off the sacrificial altars and devour them in the sight of the very gods he plundered. He banqueted four times a day, and continually invited himself to private banquets at all hours, costing his hosts a ruinous minimum of 4000 gold pieces per meal; in one feast, offered by his brother, 2000 fish and 7000 game birds were served; in another, Vitellius dedicated a huge dish to the Goddess Minerva, naming it *The Shield of Minerva the Protectress,* consisting of the rarest victuals: pike livers, pheasant and peacock brains, flamingo tongues and lamprey milt, all collected from the distant corners of his vast empire.

Sheer luxury, excess and gluttony never constitute cuisine. Vitellius' passions offer an allegory of what gastronomy is *not* about, all those alimentary practices and syndromes that are primarily concerned with something other than taste: anorexia, aphrodisiacs, ascetic renunciation, black magic potions, white magic elixirs, bulemia, cannibalism, coprophagy, erotic philtres, spiritual macrobiotics, neurotic oral fixations, poisons, religious prohibitions, psychotic deliria. Such fantasies of the table—be they psychotic or erotic, mercantile or theological—must be distinguished from those of cuisine. Rather than simply avow a fascination for the extreme limits of culinary phantasms, one must

recover the manner in which such considerations inform, rather than deform, cuisine.

*

The Roman Emperor Heliogabalus once sent hunters to the land of Lydia, offering 200 pieces of gold to the man who brought back a phoenix. None did. It is difficult to guage the meaning of this gesture by the man whom Artaud characterized as "the anarchist crowned," who, perhaps tired of the repeated human sacrifices to his own divine nature, sought a rarer offering. For Heliogabalus, true to his own solar name, wished to bring heaven down to earth, in a cruel and erotic scenario of death. The blood of the sacrifices organized by the Priest of the Cult of the Sun, flowing from the sacrificial alters of the Temple of Emèse, must not be allowed to course through normal sewers to the sea. Rather, a special system was necessary:

> Through these sewers—in the form of an ardent tendril, whose circumference diminished as they reached into the depths of the earth—the blood of beings sacrificed in prescribed rites would regain the sacred corners of the earth, touching primitive geological veins, with congealed shudderings of chaos.[3]

Such blood—ambivalent symbol of life and death—is food for the gods. Sacrifice is a form of communication, and a primal condition for community; it is a manner of resolving the enigmas of existence and of illuminating the mysteries of origins. Sacrifice mediates the contradictions inherent in the polarizations between life and death, heaven and hell, past and future, time and eternity, creation and apocalypse, body and spirit, host and guest, master and slave. Within a theological system, the symbolic is inaugurated by the violence of sacrifice which transforms the body into a signifier, bound to circulate within a restricted economy of exchange. The sacred implies mystery, or mystification. When the internal contradictions of this mystery principal demand resolution, it may be manifested in sacrilege as an attempt to transcend both the limits of individuality and the boundary between the sacred and the profane. Such wisdom is thus a function of blasphemy, abomination, and transgression. Whence the double significance of Heliogabalus' quest—sacred sacrifice, profane cuisine—where the phoenix would be the mythological, culinary emblem or equivalent of the Rite of the Sun. The phoenix has a quite definite, indeed overdetermined, history. Its cycle is described by Jean-Pierre Vernant:

> The incandescent life of the Phoenix follows a circular course, increasing and decreasing, with birth, death and rebirth following a cycle that passes from an aromatic bird closer to the sun than the eagle flying at great heights, to the state of a worm in rotting matter, more chthonian than the snake or the bat. From the bird's ashes, consumed at the end of its long existence in a blazing aromatic nest, is born a small earth-worm, nourished by humidity, which shall in turn become a phoenix.[4]

This creature has a life cycle which is the very allegory of myth itself; it is also, not coincidentally, an allegory of cuisine, taken in its structural instance, as it spans the antithetical conditions of: raw/cooked, cold/hot, fresh/rotten, moist/dry, high (gamy)/aromatized. The phoenix would thus be the perfect dish and the ideal offering, paradoxically encompassing the contradictory possibilities of diverse cooking techniques, inherent alimentary difference, and sacred symbolism. Like the transsubstantiation of the host or cannibalistic communion, the eating of the phoenix would constitute a truly transcendental gastronomic act.

Notes

1. Eugène Minkowski, *Lived Time,* trans. Nancy Metzel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 180–181.
2. M.F.K. Fisher, *An Alphabet for Gourmets* (1940), reprinted in *The Art of Eating* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 601.
3. Antonin Artaud, *Héliogabale ou l'anarchiste couronné* (1934), in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 39.
4. Jean-Pierre Vernant, Introduction to Marcel Detienne, *Les jardins d'Adonis* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), xxxiii.

TINA ROTENBERG

Excerpt from
NO NAME NO NUMBER NO ADDRESS

PART 2

VIII

She left the house without closing the door, and drove towards the city, speeding through the toll booth. She was sure that the songs on the radio were meant for her, that she needn't look in her rear view mirror before she changed lanes, for he was directing her. He drove the car ahead of her and the car behind her. She followed his white car out of the city, surrounded on all sides by white butterflies that reminded her of stars.

She drove south to a small town by the ocean. The night air cut into her flesh. She entered the rear of a house under construction, and hummed softly to herself as she lay on the bare wood floor boards.

A man came down the stairs, wary and suspicious. He was followed by a woman who looked frightened. They asked her what she was doing there. When she didn't answer, they called the police.

The police took her to the station and asked her questions. What is your name? Where do you live? What is your name? Just tell us your name. She remained silent. The policeman nicely told her that he would have to jail her if she refused to talk.

(October 10, 1985 I can't help wondering how responsible I am for my own misfortune. . . but that in itself is

presumptuous because it assumes that I should have more perfect foresight and I will never have perfect foresight . . . However, I am becoming weary of all the misfortune and need a way to pick myself up.)

She nestled close to his wet body and vowed to follow him. Eventually he rose and walked into the sea. When he put his nose in the water, she did likewise, coming up screaming with her hair streaming wet. She ran out of the ocean into the arms of three people who held her in a long embrace. They took her to a restaurant and bought her soup. Gave her a blue silk Japanese jacket. She was sure she had died and finally reached heaven.

IX

Writing from memory perplexes. The danger is we bore ourselves with what we already know. And yet, if only to let go of what we hate to remember by committing it to a page. But perhaps this act of ritual burial only brings us closer to what we'd prefer to forget. Memories like a frieze, neither move nor progress, as though they have died.

(Letter to J.W. October 20, 1990. . . I remember being late, being arrogant, being flippant and pretending to understand better than you what was worrying you. In 1985, I imagined that I could shrug off responsibility for such behavior under the guise of "illness." I may have been conscious of the harm I did that day. However, I now believe that I should take responsibility for such awareness.)

Did his pride let him send this letter? Or did he keep it to himself? If the letter was sent, did it reach a dead end? Were there more letters? More attempts to repair the friendships he unwittingly destroyed and then helplessly mourned?

X

She trained herself to reveal each slight aberration of thought or action. But the road "out" was too seductive. Drawn to the fine line, stepping in and out of what others called "reality."

She drove to I. and booked a room in the back with white cotton curtains. He was the man with the red face and blond hair. She was as close as a hair to the redemption that she sought. At 3:30 AM she knelt beside her bed and prayed shamelessly for him to come to her.

(January 18, 1987 I flew to Vancouver, bought a bicycle and stereo system for my hosts, an extra set of ski equipment. I became very paranoid; people were treating me differently and I didn't know why. I imagined that I was responsible for the explosion of the space shuttle due to something I had said to my father on the telephone. (This was extremely upsetting) I switched planes at the last second on the way home because I was afraid that my plane would be blown up.)

XI

When we open the door to a constellation of memories, they come very quickly, leaving us no time to hone and curtail our sentences. We repeat words and phrases, write in the simplest syntax and generally shame ourselves into writing at the level of an eight year old, but less interestingly, because the writing is divested of curious spelling errors and turns of thought expressed with striking elisions and ellipses.

Her heart broken in pieces like a pot that reassembled itself as she stood by her hospital bed, shaken by a force beyond her control. She spurred herself to receive the involuntary movements of her body, to wait until the shaking ended. When it was over, she knew that she was well.

(December 23, 1990 To some extent, I look for criticism or the hint of criticism even where it doesn't exist. I feel like a soldier who grabs his sword and shield every time a bird flies by.)

XII

"One of the major Voudoun rituals is the ceremony of *retirer d'en bas de l'eau,* the reclamation of the soul of the deceased from the waters of the abyss, the world of *Les Invisibles.*"

—Maya Deren

She pranced along the beach, lifting her skirt as she entered the water. He walked along the shore, silent and watchful. She waded deeper into the lake. This was her immersion, and she yearned for him to join her in her momentary joy. But he remained on the beach, solemn in his knowledge that she had followed him into the deeper, unfathomable corners of their closeness. She called to him. He gazed at her. She reached for a celebration of their reunion, emerging from the water laughing and flirtatious.

The day glowed, warming her wet clothes. This was her adventure, her quest, to join herself to him in the gaiety of her spirit. But he was already withdrawing into the tomb of their affection.

(September 1985 Furthermore, privacy is a separate issue from group decisions about phones. Perhaps we should discuss it; I don't care if I never set foot in your bedroom if that is what you would like and can find a calm way to say it.)

This was her current fear—that she would search for a ghost, a lost spirit whose abandonment of her life was so unexpected, so sudden and mysterious, that she would not let him stay dead.

XIII

"The hero of man's metaphysical adventure—his healer, his redeemer, his guide and guardian—is always a corpse."

—Maya Deren

She trained herself to listen from thousands of miles away to the vagaries of his mind, and, when he fell, she experienced a comparable breakdown of lucidity. She entered the zone of the twins where one soul is so closely linked to the other that whatever befell one of them, the other would experience.

(May 9, 1991 . . .I am sensitized to many subtle and seemingly hidden hurts that most people ignore. It is like driving on an expressway without a windshield. None of the other drivers care about the bugs, dirt and birdshit that

land on their windshield. It would take something as traumatic as hitting another car to affect their trip. However, for me, without my windshield, a pebble in the face could mean loss of an eye. I could get a bug up my nose or a birdshit shampoo. The only way that I could cope is by slowing down or taking side streets. The advantage is, that when I slow down and get off the expressway, I find out what the city is really like. With the wind in my face, I understand what the car's speed really means. I both learn how to survive without the windshield and I find out what life is really like.

The problem is, that I still haven't gotten completely used to driving without a windshield and so I don't always know which are the hurts and hazards that I alone feel and which are the ones that everyone feels.)

Wherever she thought she recognized him, she fell in love. These accidents of attachment never worked. It was like a betrayal of nature, a departure from the sacred connection they tacitly vowed to protect from all substitutes.

Such attractions only occurred during periods when one or both of them were unreachable, unprotected, wandering lost, unrecuperable for several days, sometimes weeks, even months. Then the bond was threatened, shaky, destabilized and destabilizing. It was as if she appeared in a mirror that he mistook for himself. By entering the mirror, she entered a world of fantasy, searching, mourning her fallen twin.

XIV

"The voice had an extraordinary sadness. Pure from all body, pure from all passion, going out into the world, solitary, unanswered, breaking against rocks—so it sounded."

—Virginia Woolf

She sat for hours and watched him read. Unforgettable look of concentration, patience, and suffering. She drew him with her eyes. Over and over. She could not absorb him without drawing him. She wished to know the place he touched within himself.

She watched the lily open its petals with a dryness in her throat. She was his lily.

They entered the water together, both silly and laughing. She could not tell him where she went. She didn't want to suffocate him. She stroked him with her eyes. He felt how warm her eyes were, how safe. Blindly, he reached for her. But she was gone, and he didn't know if he could ever find her again.

He was still with a stillness she had learned to recognize. A cavern of stillness which she entered only to lie among the leaves of the forest, and weep for the moment he must have fallen, thousands of miles away in a different time. She was always straining towards that point of breakage. She could not forgive. Or forget that he had gone somewhere totally without her. She must find him there, duplicate his journey. How else could she understand him?

(This is the road we took as we entered the Alps. It keeps getting more and more beautiful—right now, we're camped beside an alpine stream up in the Italian Alps. We're twenty-five kilometers from the Brenner pass and thirty kilometers from the Austrian border, at least the modern Austrian border—everyone is Austrian within one hundred kilometers anyway.)

She saw him across the room and sensed, as always, the intentness of his presence. As though he was poised on the edge of a question that he asked himself repeatedly without ever receiving an answer. They knew one another well and signaled that knowledge to each other without exchanging a word. This was her comfort—to feel so united with him, without so much as a touch. It was as if his hand hovered over her skin. She felt the muscles in his shoulders and down his back. He was just a few inches taller than her, so when they lay together, they matched.

(May 5, 1985 How do I reconcile the fact that I could have saved myself, Dr. P, the College of Physicians and Surgeons a lot of wasted time by lying. . . As offensive as it is to lie about that kind of thing, I believe it may be a type of

personal secret whose nature makes it private property that should not be violated.)

XV

She taught him the secrets of the light. Grey light filtered through snow-cast windows. Her message lacked words. It was a sacred feeling, a feeling for the grove of fir trees at the bottom of the sprawling lawn.

Who combined them into one spirit that circled ceaselessly round their heads, penetrated their eyes, and cast a dark hue over their skin? His eyes sought hers and hers rested upon him, causing his interior spaces to leap towards her, mimicking her sadness.

She learned to wander, shedding her possessions in restaurants, on street corners, in grocery stores.

As she walked the aisles she could smell the food. The guy at the cash register offered her a sandwich. She dropped her black leather jacket in a box in one of the aisles.

(Dearest, Here's an example of one studying trick that I forgot to mention to you—writing in caves. There are no distractions, no noise, it's too cold to think of anything but working, and the only problem is that there is no light.)

Images of him burned their way across her mind.

When she kissed him, her lips turned blue from cold.

The story must begin in the middle and ascend towards the end and the beginning simultaneously. There is no memory left and only memory hangs in shreds upon her night table.

He was four and she was ten. He was sixteen and she was twenty-two. He was thirty-six and she was forty-two. She was twenty-five and he was nineteen. She was twenty-eight and he was twenty-two. She was thirty-six and he was thirty.

Half a life stripped away.

There is no other end of the line, no pauses, no voice, no hello or good-bye. Tiny fir trees that tell her which direction his body lies.

This conversation has no interlocutor. It is only her history told to a dead man.

XVI

"Silence is perhaps a word, a paradoxical word, the silence of the world *silence,* yet surely we feel that it is linked to the cry, the voiceless cry, which breaks with all utterances, which is addressed to no one and which no one receives, the cry that lapses and decries."

—Maurice Blanchot

Their lives ran parallel, dipping into creeks and valleys simultaneously, alternately. The timing didn't matter. What mattered was the coincidence of partners in this maelstrom of shocking experiments with perception and self-knowledge, the drive to pursue a perfection that guilt and compassion coordinated.

(Dearest, Right now I'm lying on two sleeping bags on top of a small piece of rubber with an eight foot by four foot piece of plastic stretched over top of me. It's probably about 10:00 in the morning and I think I've been in this sleeping bag since about seven o'clock last night when it first started snowing. It's still snowing on and off and it's quite windy, so I'm not getting out of this sleeping bag until the sun comes out. It's cold! I'm in a little clearing in the middle of the forest on a hillside which slopes down to sea level. I was left here two days ago and will be picked up tomorrow. My bag of food rations contains one can of tuna fish, two biscuits, one package of soup which I had last night for dinner, two tea bags and four sugar cubes as well as ten matches. It doesn't sound like much, but since I do nothing but lie out here and write, I don't expend a lot of energy. I only feel hungry on the rare occasion that I have to move, such as to go down to the creek to fill up my canteen.)

XVII

"So strong was his love for her it would have pushed open the lid of his coffin—had the flower she placed there not been so heavy."

—Paul Celan

She saw him sitting in a chair to the right of the nursing station. He wore a beige wool hat that completely covered his hair. There was a strength in the angles of his face that she hadn't seen before. He was almost unrecognizable. He had waited for her for three whole days. As she hid under the spruce trees in the shadows.

All day she thought she was dying. When he came and sat on her bed, she knew that she was safe at last. This was the power of his compassion—to meet her at the point where she had lost him.

(August 1990 I have tried to imagine my way into your thoughts and I write here two ways of thinking about the anger that has passed between us. I have taken the liberty of writing this from your point of view as if you could have thought these thoughts yourself.)

ANDREW JORON

SPINE TO SPIN, SPOKE TO SPEAK

The pilot alone knows
That the plot is missing its
Eye.

Why isn't this "ominous science"
  itself afraid, a frayed
Identity?

Pray, protagonist–
Prey to this series of staggered instants.

Here the optic
Paints its hole, its self-consuming moment.
It is speech, dispelled, that
  begs to begin to ache.

So that *wind* accelerates to *wound,* a dead sound
  enlivened by the visitation of owls.

As pallid as parallel, the cry
Of the negative is not the negative
  of the cry–an irreparable blessing–

A green world's
  "sibilant shadows" where
The syllables of your name are growing younger.

As involuntary as involuted, "who"
  returns its noun

to each tender branch
That *noon* breaks into *no one.*

Point of view
Hovers, a circular cloud, over evacuated
Time.

That heard its herd bellow below
the terraced cities, the milled millions

as sold as unsouled, ghost-cargos.

A symptom of the Maddening–
Woman undressed of her flesh.
Man's address
to Thou, & the flag of Thou.
How the fallen state
Meets the starry horizon, veil
against witness, hunger against void.

O, oldest
outermost Other–

Ageing mask
Of the transparent Earth. Unspeculated
image
Streaked with mirror & stricken words.

You are neither the torn, nor the thorn.

You are the many-petalled
melting point of repeating decimals. . .

Receiver, river
Has been burned into voice, a day-dark ribbon.

All signal is this
Afterglow.

ANSELM HOLLO

FIVE POEMS

WE ARE HAVING IT AGAIN AND WITHOUT SORROW

molecular vessel named I Am December
gesticulates its way through mind maze
looking for some opaque you

archy old
& after reading les surréalistes some more

now mental spin to winding woods
in ancient jars brain slowly happened
words come in spurts drool dream at dawn
history from a tooth
night grottos of the blesséd matter
in sleepwalk time no present face

rainy street no stars equals my language

now let us end
with a discreet representation
of a real lightbulb
still doing its connotations
in a city of transparent sepulchers

off to ride
last waltz railroad in November sun

AD QUODLIBET

wheel around on best days riding the hum
let coffee fumes spread across Dasein trail
& its perfect unconscious journals
avoid the wrongheaded
even when you can hear them
working up opinions
inside their unpleasant little brains
& the contemporary has aged
at least twenty years
& now has industrial presence of slag heap
just light a fire in the magic bag
spend evening by the well
raise cup of quest to speeding fugitive

A HUNDRED MULE DEER IN THE BACKYARD

i.m. Allen Ginsberg

sleepwalkers' chess *condensare ad absurdum*
why did we say what we just seem to have said
not a thought in our heads
is the thought in my head
meaning
meaning
is a product
frame form work the old farm
stalking about like some mad Highlander
yet gigglily prudent as a bat's bellybutton
peering at words "as if all worlds were there"
then think freedom music
not deplorable platforms
think lovely list of things e.g.
Socialist Internationals Paris 1889 & Erfurt 1891:

democracy & equal rights for all
including women
separation of church & state
free education
including higher education
free medical service
graduated taxes
the eight-hour work day
the right to organize unions

though serious revolvers
they stood no sporting chance

nor does the poet
walk around making hilarious remarks

don't shelve that book yet
I want to remember him a little longer

FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF PROFESSOR DOPPELGANGER

America still talk bizarre
falls off knocks versions about
stuff odd extensions
this has had bad maintaining

Eve's hand on Adam's inordinate elevation
individual lotus be that way
on day of Utopian items defined

news pinned on heart
as we wheel in to sleep's bright anagrams

she is the model in his dream life class
not having but having the seeing of her

these are our old forms

LIFE IN THE TWISTS

bare freckled skin under black cloak
reminders of turns not taken or not taken well
endless parentheses faraway dogs
nighthawks crouched in basement cafeteria
with Rita Hayworth in her prime
more bitter than instant brewed
in aluminum pot on our way to the program
of was it social uplift or another 'summer of love'
between Dubuque and Sioux City

"no let me tell you I am the phantom
of the second life
a wanderer a beautiful stray
on the face of the earth"

shook off the dust & put on her hat

"all that was ever is
or vice versa. . ."

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

EIGHT POEMS

(Tr. from the French
by Ron Padgett)

A PHANTOM OF CLOUDS

As it was the eve of the 14th of July
About four o'clock in the afternoon
I went out to see the saltimbanques

You don't see these open-air performances
Much in Paris these days
When I was young you saw a lot more of them than now
Almost all of them have gone out into the provinces

I was walking down the Boulevard Saint-Germain
And in a little square located between Saint-Germain-des-Prés
and the statue of Danton
I saw the saltimbanques

Surrounded by people mute and resigned to waiting
I made a place for myself in this circle to get a good look
Impressive weights
Belgian towns lifted at arm's length by a Russian worker from
Longwy
Black hollow dumbbells whose bars are frozen rivers
Fingers rolling a cigarette bitter and delicious like life

A lot of dirty rugs covered the ground
Rugs with creases that would never come out
Rugs almost completely the color of dust
And with a few yellow or green stains impossible to get rid of
Like a melody that haunts you

Do you see the wild and skinny character
The ashes of his forefathers came out in his graying beard
He wore his entire heritage on his face
He seemed to be dreaming of the future
Mechanically turning the crank on his Barbary organ
Whose slow voice gave out its own marvelous lamentation
Glug-glugs quacks and dull moans

The saltimbanques didn't move
The oldest one wore tights the violet pink that comes to the cheeks of certain fresh young girls near the point of death

This particular pink especially moves into the wrinkles around the mouth
Or near the nostrils
It's an absolutely treacherous pink

This man wore on his back
The ignoble shade of his lungs
Arms arms everywhere were going on guard

The second saltimbanque
Was dressed only in his shadow
I watched him a long time
His face completely escapes me
He's a headless man

And another one looked seedy
A tough guy trashy and good at the same time
With his baggy pants and garters
Didn't he look like a pimp getting spruced up

The music stopped and negotiations with the audience began
Who coin by coin tossed the sum of two francs fifty onto the rug
Instead of the three francs the old man had set as the price

But when it became clear that no one would give any more
He decided to start the show
From under the organ a very small saltimbanque dressed in
pulmonary pink came out
With fur at his wrists and ankles
He gave little cries
And bowed opening his arms nicely
Palms up

With one leg back for genuflection
He bowed to the four cardinal points
And when he walked on a ball
His thin body became a music so delicate that not one of the
spectators was untouched by it
A little inhuman spirit
Each one thought
And this music of forms
Overwhelmed that of the mechanical organ
Ground by the man whose face was covered with ancestors

The little saltimbanque turned cartwheels
With such harmony
That the organ stopped
And the organist hid his face in his hands
With fingers like the descendants of his destiny
Minuscule fetuses coming out of his beard
New cries of Redskins
Angelic music of the trees
Disappearance of the child

The saltimbanques lifted the big weights at arm's length
They juggled the weights

But each spectator was searching in himself for the
miraculous child
Century O century of clouds

ANNIE

On the coast of Texas
Between Mobile and Galveston there's a
Large garden filled with roses
It also contains a villa
Which is a large rose

Often a woman strolls along
In the garden all alone
And when I walk along the line of lime trees by the road
My eyes meet hers and hers meet mine

Since that woman is a Mennonite
There are no rosebuds and no buttons on her clothes
Two of them are missing from my coat
The lady and I follow nearly the same rite

PRAYER

When I was a child of two
My mother dressed me only in white and blue
O Holy Virgin
Do you love me still
Me I know
I will
Love you till I die
Even though I've changed
I don't believe in heaven or in hell
I don't believe I don't believe
The sailor who was saved
Because he never forgot to say
A Hail Mary every day
Looked just like me looked just like me

HOTEL

My room is shaped like a cage
The sun sticks its arm through the window
But I who want to smoke and make mirages
I light my cigarette with daylight
I don't want to work I want to smoke

LA GRENOUILLÈRE

At the island's edge
The empty rowboats are gently bumping one another
And now
Neither on Sunday nor on any other day of the week
Neither the painters nor Maupassant goes out
Bare-armed in their rowboats with big-chested women
Dumb as all get-out
Little boats you make me feel really sad
At the island's edge

THE PONT MIRABEAU

Beneath the Pont Mirabeau flows the Seine
And our loves
Why do I hear that old refrain
Joy always used to follow pain

Let the hour chime the light wane
The days go by I remain

With your hand in my hand turn your face to my face
While under the
Bridge of our arms goes past
Waves so tired of the everlasting gaze

Let the hour chime the light wane
The days go by I remain

Love goes away as this water flows
Love goes away
How idly life goes
And wildly alive is hope

Let the hour chime the light wane
The days go by I remain

Days and weeks drift past like rain
Nor time past
Nor old loves come back again
Beneath the Pont Mirabeau flows the Seine

Let the hour chime the light wane
The days go by I remain

THE WHITE SNOW

Angels angels in the sky
One is dressed like an officer
One is dressed like a cook
And the others sing

Handsome officer colored sky blue
The sweet spring a long time after the year's through
Will pin a beautiful sun on you
A beautiful sun on you

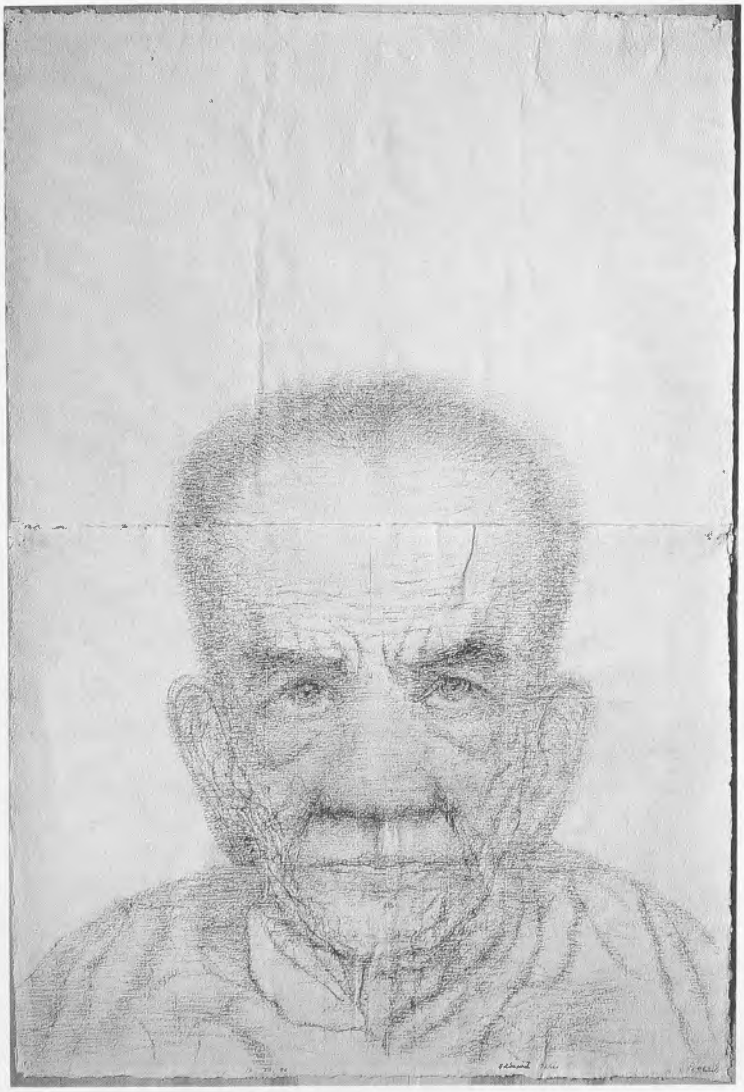
The cook plucks the goose's down
Ah! falls snow
falls and now no
Sweetheart to put my arms around

4

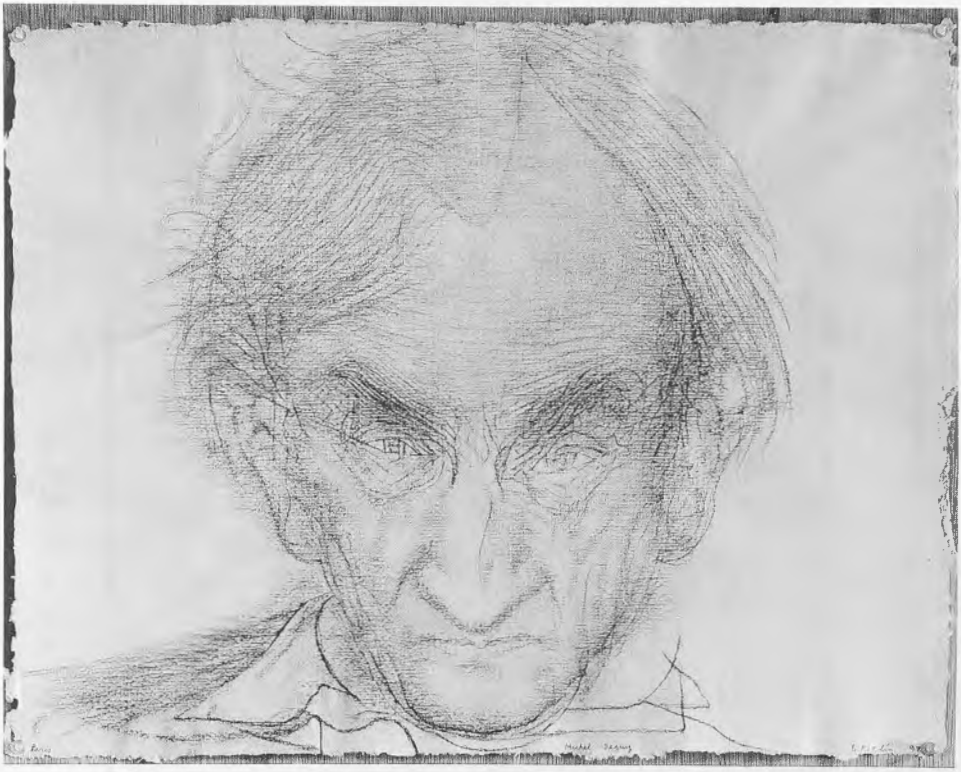
It's 4 in the morning
I get up fully dressed
In my hand a little bar of soap
Someone I love sent me
I go to wash up
I emerge from the hole we sleep in
I feel terrific
And happy to be able to wash up for the first time in three days
Then all clean I go get a shave
After that I blend in sky-blue with my blue uniform until night falls and it's a very sweet pleasure
To say no more about anything I do it's an invisible being doing it
And buttoned up and all blue now blended into the sky I disappear

IRVING PETLIN

ELEVEN DRAWINGS



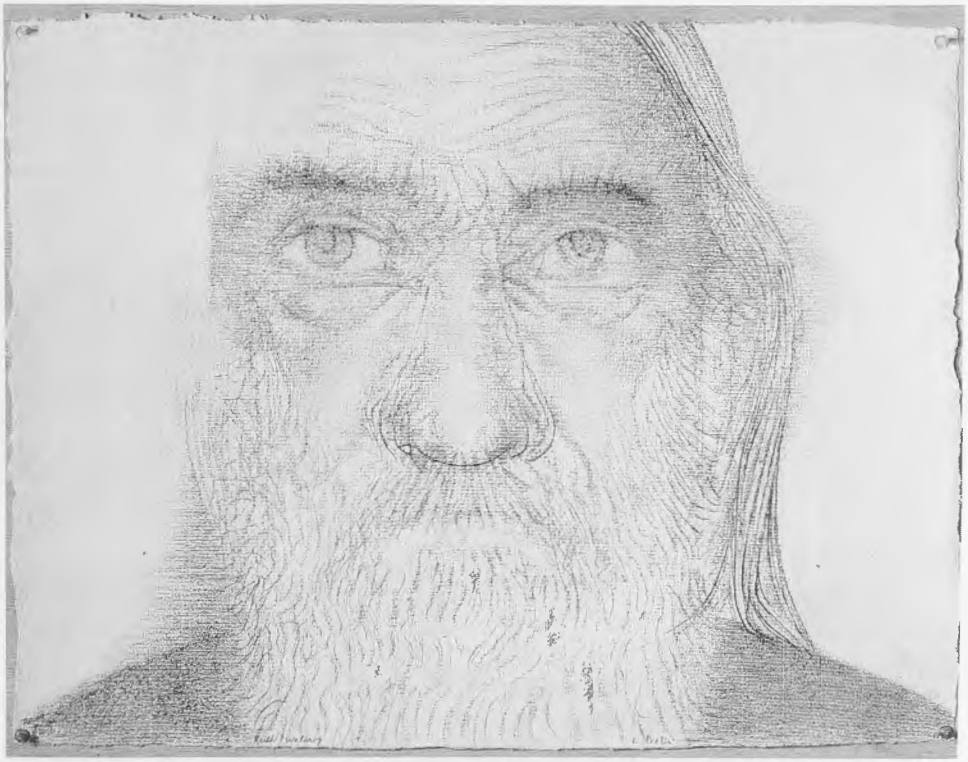
Edmond Jabès



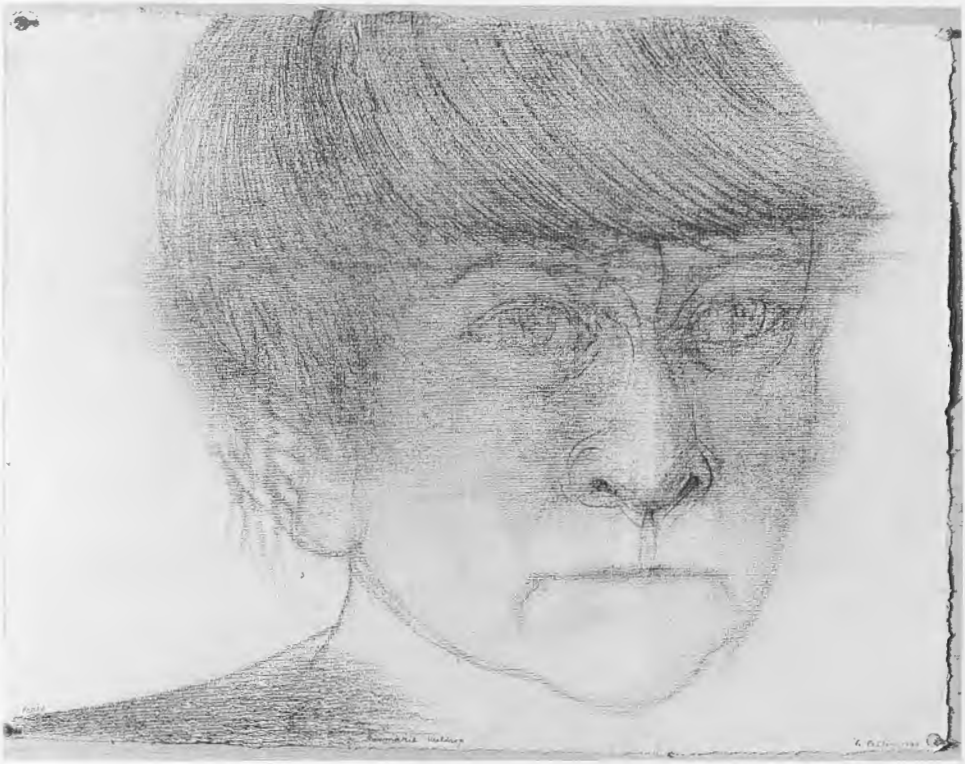
Michel Deguy

Dominique Fourcade

John Ashbery



Keith Waldrop



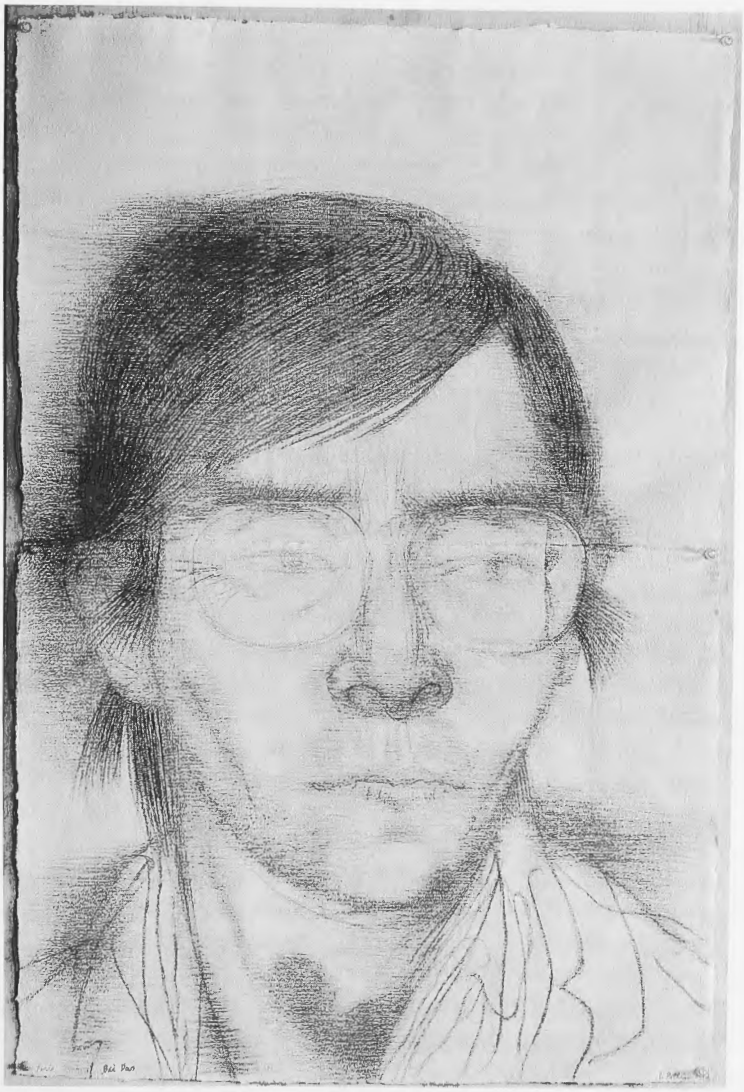
Rosmarie Waldrop

Clayton Eshleman

Norma Cole

Michael Palmer

Susan Howe



Bei Dao

A BRIEF EXCHANGE

TWEEDLEDUM and TWEEDLEDEE have, oddly enough, taken very different tacks upon reading Mr. Charles Bernstein's aptly-titled poem, "A Test for Poetry" *(Sulfur* 41) and wished to share their viewpoints with your readers.

TWEEDLEDUM WRITES. . .
Aha! In this snide poem, Mr. Charles Bernstein has exposed himself as a cultural imperialist, ridiculing the efforts of a good and honest Chinese, who is presented as scrambling willy-nilly through his bilingual dictionary, seeking approximations for horrifying ambiguities, neologisms, enallages and–horror of horrors!–failing miserably. In this process, however, he does succeed at amusing *Sulfur* readers (post-language Anglophone literates) so wittily. Not only does Ziquing Zhang collide with wall after wall, splintering into horrifying shards of Chinglish and strewing the debris of the untranslatable everywhere. No, not only this. It is *much worse* than that. Clearly, Mr. Bernstein shows us, the translator lacks even the vital, prerequisite mainframe with which he might understand this daring new art of the Occident, trying in his pathetic and ancient way to reduce such gems of the Western World as "No Pastrami" *(Rough Trades)* into the typical Chinese image-cluster and lyric narrative so that even non-langpo-initiates might "understand" them. *(Red* flags go up everywhere at this word).

Particularly funny is the moment wherein the translator asks, "Is *Mamaroneck* a place in the U.S. where wild oxes howl?" That's a real killer-diller. But what I, Tweedledum, submit is that something very different than what Mr. Bernstein intends is happening: it is yet another case of what we Victorians are so fond of calling the Emperor's New Clothes. I submit that Mr. Bernstein wanders often forth in this state of bare pubicity and full publicity, with, however, a book of theory in

each hand, each book thick enough to stun an ox. (This is in keeping with the theme of "oxes"). So I have little sympathy with this pity party of a poem, designed to show the common reader what a trial it is to be desired but misunderstood in so many languages. I submit also that it is not necessarily the case that what is untranslatable in poetry doesn't exist, but that what doesn't exist is untranslatable, and that good poems translate better than bad poems. It doesn't translate because "there's no there there." (Hence, I claim I am more of a materialist with regard to language than any langpo poet). Charles Bernstein's poem is indeed "A Test for Poetry." He failed.

TWEEDLEDEE RESPONDS. . .

I take umbrage at, and exception to, the thoughts and sentiments expressed by my colleague, Tweedledum. His first crime (nay, *felony)* is failing to have a sense of humor. "A Test for Poetry" is a poem born out of the eternal frustration inherent in the act of translation and I find its humor to be legitimately born out of a true poet's sense of the give-and-take inherent in any act of *meaning* (anything). This poem is Wittgenstein's red rubber ball bouncing and bouncing down the street, away and out of sight, into evening gloam. Mr. Bernstein has always been a poet of the *sadness of meaning.* He doesn't have to write Berryman's ball poem to show us this; he *becomes* the ball.

While I must admit that it is true that cultural differences here are foregrounded, I don't think there is any cruelty shown. Yes, the use of image in Chinese lyric poetry is *millennial,* and it is natural that an educated and gifted translator would find langpo methodology extremely challenging (nay, *pixilating)* had he not much prior familiarity with it. How many years does it take the average American poet to assimilate these practices? (And no snide remarks about Buffalo workshops here, Tweedledum!)

I find "A Test for Poetry" to be one of Mr. Bernstein's finest poems to date. The title alludes to the structure of the poem itself, how it is cast in the form of those horrible "objective" questions that follow the poems themselves in horrible anthologies of poetry which poetry-hating universities rely so much on. Anyone who has suffered through these could not possibly miss the horrible *cadences* in which those questions were written, all presumably by the same person. But here Bernstein has turned this procrustean bed into Rousseau's divan in the jungle for Yadwigha. He is telling us that he doesn't know the answers *either.* Probably he is amazed at how these questions came to reside in his poem. They befuddle and amuse him. They make him feel stupid but interested; he was right after all; language is totally alien, non-self masquerading as self. It has infiltrated meaning's immune system.

Perhaps his chuckle here is a mortal one. He knows he is not really present in the poems, in any of them. Mallarmé stops looking in the mirror after a time.

"A Test for Poetry" is a fine poem, if one calculated to cause controversy and heartache on all sides. I salute the poet for his bravery in writing it.

P.S. Tweedledum and Tweedledee apologize for missing what they each half-believe is a reference to an Auden quote (re translating Cavafy).

—W.B. KECKLER

A LETTER FROM BERLIN: SCREENING TRANSFORMATION

The screen of Berlin is where its transformations are compulsively inscribed. The zone between the city's inhabitants and those spectacularly mutating screens is the interstice where cinema collides with architecture. Berlin becomes ever more possessed by the urgency of that ocular crash as the city approaches the end of the century in which it has incessantly devastated and enlivened Europe. With the vast rebuilding work evident everywhere in the east of the city, the work in progress towards Berlin's regaining of its status as Germany's capital city tangibly recreates history before its citizens' eyes. The contrast between the city's scars and its innovations is starker than ever. Destruction and creativity fit intimately together in Berlin. The city projects its own visual and temporally multiple presence, never more so than with Christo's wrapping of the Reichstag in July 1995. By day, the grey-wrapped building is void, canceled. As Christo declared on Berlin television, the impact he wanted was that of seeing the building momentarily disappear, and nothing more. But by night, vast crowds gather in the heat of the Berlin night. They create their own cacophonous soundtrack as they sit before the Reichstag and gaze in transfixed awe at the spectacle of nothing. Into that nothing, the imageries from the past, the present and the future of Berlin are incessantly generated, since Berlin is the sensorium of Europe. The darkness transforms hypnotic vision into intersecting trajectories of memory and imagery. And on such nights, the entirety of Berlin is one vast cinema: the

projectionist is insane, the film reels are in reverse order, the seats are a bizarre mix of the broken and the spanking new, and the audience is deliriously facing in every wrong direction. On the final nights of the wrapping, the grey sheets start to unravel from the Reichstag and cranes appear around the building. The screen of the city is dismantled before its participants' eyes, and the murderously banal spectacle of everyday life in the city slides back into place for another instant. Simultaneously with the wrapping of the Reichstag, Berlin's annual Techno music carnival—the Love Parade—snakes through the center of the city in a vast and obliterating wall of noise. To some extent, young Berliners see the Love Parade and its crazed participants as the unnatural extension of the punk movement. Where punk was a volatile concoction of political outcry and sheer malicious delight, the Love Parade too is a provocative but fundamentally pleasurable experience. It embodies both the distrust which Berliners manifest towards the immense big-business transformations which are elevating in the city, and the exhilaration with which they display that resistance. The surfaces of Berlin are sonically charged with that resistance, as a counterpoint to the genealogies of graffiti which have now been layering their way into the eastern streets of Berlin for eight years or so. This isn't the first time that Berliners have poured through the city streets, and the Love Parade necessarily and contradictorily evokes both the Nazi parades of the 1930s and the mass demonstrations against Nazism. The Love Parade is the finale of Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days* filmed by Leni Reifenstahl. With the skepticism that led Berliners in 1933 to revile Hitler and oppose his election while much of the rest of Germany embraced Nazism, they continue to demonstrate their capacity to negate the best-made plans of the city authorities. Berlin's contemporary artists—often Techno musicians and filmmakers and architects as well as artists—are as far from the conceptual artists of the 1970s and the figurative painters of the 1980s as it's possible to go. An obsolete technology such as Super-8 is the vital film medium for seizing the future of a city which is irrevocably exiled. The new exiled filmmakers inhabiting Berlin from Kurdistan and Armenia and Croatia reveal the city as an arena where the obsession with exile has a preeminent site. It was only when the DDR's final dictator, Erich Honecker, went into exile and death in Chile that the city grew to love him as part of itself. The city assembles its new visual configurations—of buildings, of cinematic imageries, of obsessions: all equally material—in anticipation of the calamitous sensation of ecstasy their oncoming cancellation will provoke, in the heart of Europe.

—STEPHEN BARBER, July 1997

The cave art of the Old Stone Age is currently being investigated more profoundly and scientifically than before. Ethnographic comparison is conspicuously assuming a place beside the immanent analysis of representation.

The ethnographic method teaches that we must penetrate ever deeper into a given society's various spheres of life. Such spheres include speech, the utilization of tribal territory, religious convictions, ritual, social structure, the kinship system—and also artistic expression, which cannot be comprehended in isolation from the rest. An ethnographer would not ask an Australian aborigine directly and brutally: "What do these pictures mean?" Instead, he would take the time to converse with him slowly and patiently, and so assemble, by indirect means, information from the most disparate spheres, in order to gradually make visible the meaning of the pictures.

Archaeologists studying prehistory must proceed in the same manner. The structuralist and all-too-simplifying "search for meaning," as described by the late prehistorian André Leroi-Gourhan, now appears to be no longer appropriate; indeed, it seems irrelevant. Today, the archaeological site is first of all thoroughly examined. An exact and systematic documentation of the rock paintings is rendered by means of modern methods such as photography and diagramming. These are supplemented by physical-chemical analyses of pigments, using tiny samples of material (less than a milligram). Thus we learn the exact composition of the coloration; we can then compare the figures to one another and attempt to discover, for example, which figures originated at the same time, or by the same hand. If the pigments contain organic material, the paintings also can be dated precisely with the carbon-14 method. In addition, the figures are reproduced in their original size on a cave wall; here, the work is executed according to "prehistoric" methods and conditions.

We know that these sacred places were in use, with some interruptions, over a very long period of time. The cave of Cougnac was used for ten thousand years, and the grotto of Cosquer for over eight thousand. In certain cases, the tribe gathered in its entirety to witness the rites; in other cases, only a few of its members paid homage to an intimate art. Many rites involved touching the walls with paint-covered hands; sometimes existing figures were merely renewed, and no new ones created. Limestone formations often were specially emphasized or destroyed; while near the paintings, sacrificial or votive offerings were cast into fissures.

The most important goal of the archaeological investigation of stone-age cave art is to understand how the function of the painted sites changed. It is becoming evident that, over time, the cave art continually received fresh interpretations. The perdurability of the pictures themselves in no way implies that their meaning remained constant. On the contrary, many indications suggest that, in subtle ways, the pictures proved adaptable to a flux of meanings. The outlines of many older patterns were gradually reworked by later modes of application, showing either a progressive development or a total mutation of their meaning: the pictures were utilized continuously (or sporadically) over the course of millennia by societies with completely heterogeneous motives.

The ethnographic study of stone-age art has yielded significant revelations. In 1952, the ethnologist N. W. G. Macintosh published an article that documented and interpreted rock art from two sites in northern Australia, Tindandjal and Beswick Cave. For this study, he relied exclusively on immanent analysis of the representations and on his conventional ethnological notions. Twenty years later, old aborigines who had been initiated into the tradition disclosed to him the true meaning of the paintings, and Macintosh realized how much he had erred in his first investigation.

His second article clearly indicated the limitation of all forms of immanent analysis. The belief that the document alone can give rise to a proper interpretation was exposed here as a positivistic illusion. Macintosh thereby issued a rebuff to André Leroi-Gourhan, who in 1960 asserted that prehistorians investigating stone-age art could "immediately understand the Paleolithic through that which it spontaneously provided." Thus, from comparative ethnography and from the findings of Macintosh, we have learned to be highly mistrustful vis-à-vis the supposed "spontaneity" of the Paleolithic world. Instead, our relation to the Paleolithic necessitates a protracted and painstaking decoding based on a graphic documentation of the cave walls. Caution is well-advised, for the researcher is in danger of falling victim to his subjectivity, of projecting his ideas upon the object of study (as initially happened to Macintosh). The cave documents cannot tell us everything.

A further consideration: the variety of thought-systems underlying the artistic activity of *Homo sapiens* is not infinite. Paleolithic art has been variously interpreted over the past hundred years as pure art or as magic, as totemism, sexual symbolism, or shamanism. The supporting evidence for these interpretations has been gathered from the far corners of the world (notably, from the art of aboriginal Australia). The search for universals in the process of artistic creation and the eventual

differentiation of this process according to various types on a world scale remain fascinating pursuits in the study of the earliest art.

During my stay in Australia, I learned a great deal about cave art through my contact with aborigines. Thanks to this fieldwork, I could subsequently look upon the Paleolithic art in France with new eyes. I understood better how the representations in French caves might have originated. Thus, in attempting to reproduce the artwork, I blew the colors directly onto the wall with my mouth, a spray technique that the aborigines of the Northern Territories still employ. The pigments are chewed and then "sprayed on" directly with the mouth. On the other hand, I relied upon a thorough analysis and documentation of the figures with the help of infrared photography, examining the superimposition of strokes and the relation between the paintings and their undercoat. I drew wall maps with contour lines and analyzed pigmentation. In one field experiment, I made original-size copies of the stippled horses in the French cave of Pech Merle (3.5 x 1.6 meters) as well as of isolated figures from the caves of Lascaux and Chauvet.

The reproduction of the stippled horses from Pech Merle took a week. All the patterns of the panel were copied: two horses, six hand negatives in black, 212 black dots, 32 red dots, seven negatives of bent fingers in red, and the outline of a fish, likewise in red. With all the details, even the most minute, such as color gradations and superimpositions. The experiment entirely confirmed the use of the spray technique. It provided important information about the length of time required for such work and about the number of persons participating in it, about the imprints and traces on the cave floor and about the requisite light.

We know now that the spray technique was used not only at Pech Merle, but also in many other caves such as El Castillo or Lascaux. The prehistorian who himself applies this technique experiences it on the bodily level. The spray technique appears to have possessed an extraordinarily symbolic significance: it is the human breath that, in the truest sense of the word, breathes life into the cave wall by creating an animal or a sign there. There can be no more direct or closer unity between the creator and the work. As a result, the cave paintings may be interpreted as totemic or shamanistic works.

This experiment entails the closest possible approach to cave art. The prehistorian puts himself in the place of the stone-age artist, repeating the artist's gestures. In doing so, the prehistorian improves his ability to comprehend the intent behind these gestures, or even more, to grasp the spirit and occasionally also the symbolic context in which the works arose. The experiment refutes the presupposition according to which the artistic end-product was the primary aim of the

artist, whereas the creative process was only secondary. On the contrary, it is quite possible that in many cases the cave-wall image represents only the trace of a creative process whose importance was equal to, or even greater than, the end-product.

Furthermore, this investigation has incidentally revealed how poisonous many of the pigments used in stone-age art were. Manganese dioxide, for example, can cause disturbances of the nervous system, including hallucinations. The hypothesis of shamanism, according to which the paintings were rendered in a state of altered consciousness (as comparative ethnography has attested as well), is supported by this discovery. With the help of toxicological studies and pigment analyses under an electron microscope or through X-ray diffraction, all this will be examined and developed further.

—MICHEL LORBLANCHET,
Director of the Centre National
de la Recherche Scientifique
(Translated from the German
by Andrew Joron from
Die Zeit, January 31, 1997)

Noticing: Being Continued. . .

With certain pleasure I offer the following titles of several authors whose works I have previously written of in the pages of *Sulfur,* plus a few new discoveries.

Eugène Nicole, *Le caillou de l'Enfant-Perdu* (Flammarion, 1996). Following *L'oeuvre des mers* and *Les larmes de Pierre,* this continuing *bildungsroman* arrives at the moment when the narrator finally leaves the microcosmic islands of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon to arrive in France for his studies. The Proustian genius of this tale consists in the fact that the nostalgic narrative of departure is told from the point of view of the first return to the island, a temporal complexity that exists even at the level of the novel's exquisite syntax. The process of self-discovery is perpetually seconded by the deepening revelation of a language, a personality, and a past.

Valère Novarina, *La loterie Pierrot* (Héros-Limite, 1995). Novarina, whose work has appeared in *Sulfur,* recently published *La loterie*

Pierrot, an extract from his large work *La chair de l'homme,* recycled for the occasion of the 518th Foire de Crète, a popular county fair in the land of Novarina's origins, the Haute-Savoie. This work is a structuralist's dream—or perhaps nightmare—utilizing nearly a third of the verbs of the French language in simple declarative sentences, as a pretext to proffer the suggestive, amusing, and often bizarre nicknames of thousands of the inhabitants of the area. This combination of *patois* onomastics and elementary French syntax is the sort of linguistic play which, in Novarina's hands, continues to test and stretch the limits of the French language.

Chantal Thomas, ed., *Le XVIII^e siècle des femmes* (Mercure de France, 1996): Mmes. du Deffand, de Staal-Delauney, Roland, de Genlis, de Staël, de Tencin, Marie-Thérèse d'Autriche, La Margrave de Bayreuth, Julie de Lespinasse. These nine small volumes constitute a continuation of Chantal Thomas's major revision of the canon of 18th century literature, by demonstrating that those writers who were seemingly without works—the varied women of the Parisian salons—in fact shaped an entire mode of discourse. The subtle yet enormous influence of these previously neglected authors constitute an integral part of the transformation of Enlightenment literature and mores.

Pierre Saint-Amand, *The Laws of Hostility: Politics, Violence, and the Enlightenment* (Minnesota, 1996). This book reveals, in a sense, the dark side of the scenario of seduction and passion explicated in the author's earlier *The Libertine's Progress.* These acute and extensive analyses—part of a larger project soon to include contemporary sources—are crucial additions to both the critique of rationality and the political theorization of literature.

Lawrence Schehr, *Alcibiades at the Door: Gay Discourses in French Literature* (Stanford, 1995). This is the second tome, after *The Shock of Men: Homosexual Hermeneutics in French Writing,* which the author is devoting to a multi-volume project of "queering the canon." This volume investigates the textual and epistemological deep structures of homosexuality, offering not only a contentious alternative to mainstream narrative systems, but also revealing the unique manner in which homosexual literature articulates the public and private spheres. As a major contribution to both current debates on identity politics and revisionist literary studies, it offers a fine alternative to much of the (often superficially) militant polemic currently being produced in the guise of theory and criticism.

Elinor Fuchs, *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater After Modernism* (Indiana, 1996). The theoretical acumen and descriptive precision of this book will be of delight and sustenance for all those whose work, and entertainment, have been informed by the experi-

mental theater of the last several decades. Just the right book to inspire revery, reflection, and scenarization in our *fin-de-siècle.*

Jalal Toufic, *Over-Sensitivity* (Sun & Moon, 1996). Most theorists of cinema read, paradoxically, the avant-garde from the perspective of mainstream narrative film, whether unconsciously or not. This complex and disruptive, stylistically heterogeneous and hermeneutically subversive text continues the project of Toufic's earlier book, *(Vampires): An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film,* in which the exigencies of avant-garde film, conversely, inform a broader reading of narrative structure, iconology, and epistemology. In this contest, the author undertakes (an irresistible pun) the study of the previously neglected domain of *narration from the point of view of the dead,* inaugurating a major theme in which popular and traditional rituals intersect with the avant-garde.

Pierre Michon, *Le roi du bois* (Verdier, 1996). If I had to choose a favorite work of contemporary fiction, Michon's first novel, *Vies minuscules* (Gallimard, 1984), would certainly be amongst my top picks. There, the theme of the narrator's acquisition of the writerly craft is contrasted to the varied modes of his interlocutors' inarticulateness, establishing a narrative in which authorship is slowly revealed as a revindication of those "minuscule lives" which provide a silent, hidden inspiration. Michon's more recent short work, *Le roi du bois,* condenses the very moment of inspiration—a young 17th century peasant's view of an aristocratic woman leaving her carriage to shamelessly piss in the open countryside, all the while being observed by her companion—into a mythic account of the relation between desire and artistic creativity. It is one of the very rare works which I truly wish I had written, and was despondent that I didn't, and couldn't.

Lydia Vázquez, *Elogio de la seduccion y del libertinaje* (R&B, 1996). This Spanish publication is a pleasure, intellectually and otherwise, for reasons beyond its manifest erudition. For numerous, and usually appropriate, reasons, the current intellectual, social and medical climate offers very little place for erotic passion. Yet this book reminds us that Eros can also be used to combat Thanatos. Of particular interest is the section on "The War of the Senses," which offers a study of the perceptual apparatus more subtle and more sexy than those superficial "natural histories of the senses" that have recently been so successful.

Wang Ping, *Foreign Devil* (Coffee House Press, 1996). As I slowly begin to hybridize my own theoretical work with fictional elements (in my tales from *The Aphoristic Theater),* I am particularly interested in accounts that delve into the trials and tribulations of writing. One such recent discovery is *Foreign Devil,* an apparently autobiographical

novel (following the author's earlier *American Visa)* of poetic apprenticeship that reminds us that one must indeed write at all cost and with any suffering, and that authentic writing is often the most costly, both psychologically and physically. This is a book whose power may well serve, among other functions, as a sort of homeopathy against writer's block.

Elka Spoerri, ed., *Adolf Wölfli: Draftsman, Writer, Poet, Composer* (Cornell, 1997). The recent ascent of "Outsider Art" or "Art Brut" in the contemporary art scene has resulted in a spate of publications, most of which are best left unmentioned. But this book on Adolf Wölfli, considered to be among the greatest psychotic artists, promises to be the definitive English language publication for some time to come. Edited by the former director of the Fondation Wölfli, this volume includes essays that deal with all the major aspects of Wölfli's variegated artistic production, and includes many excellent illustrations of his most-celebrated, and continually haunting, works.

Jean-Paul Marcheschi, *Le livre du sommeil: Notes sur la flamme, la peinture et la nuit* (Maison de la Recherche et des Sciences Humaines de l'Université de Caen, 1996). This book—part diary, part essay, part catalogue—is by an artist whose pictorial work consists of the immixing of flame and soot, unconscious symbol and conscious gesture, mythical forms and modern icons. Here is the condensation of the night: Bachelard, Dante, Shakespeare, Dracula, Nerval, Couperin, Céline, Novalis, Sade, Hugo, Poe, Baudelaire, Boltanski. . . Essential reading for those who dream, or sleep. . .

—ALLEN S. WEISS

On reviewing the generations and some recent books by Anselm Hollo

It's disheartening when I happen to look at these notes scribbled around and sometimes against or on behalf of the books of poetry I've fallen over by accident or design. Hard not to see these incoherent or spontaneous pixels as snail-markings, the trail of whatever it was and whenever, activity of a fool unknown to me. You change your mind the next day, I must have been thinking about something else. So many books, so little time, all that. There was this young girl a month or so

ago as I was picking up my daughter from school on a cold sunny day—maybe 10 or 11, ungainly, awkward, she tugged a little toddler sibling along the sidewalk simply beaming with pride to be given such responsibility. Accidental witness to human possibility: I'll take that most days rather than write criticism or reviews. I'd rather suck horse shit through a straw than write some of what passes for significant critical prose in the most professionalized settings today.

"These monsters, critics!" said Pope but that's a laugh. You can't say boo to anything in the incestuous pockets of poetry today—not and really scare anybody anyway. Commit an act of second-degree criticism, call the roast beef pot roast. Somebody! God forbid! Those who hear are prepared to hear, that's been said, it wasn't me. Or it's just a dance step, blundering shuffle among the phantasmagoric commodities and tedious market niches. A critical conversation? I've seen the future of rock n' roll and it's name is—er, well, you know.

So criticism goes over to cultural studies, where evaluation is more an issue than an act, at least if we're talking about particular poems and how rarely that. I'll map the whole bloody field and say what these obdurate stains indicate about your position way over there in that corner marked "opposition" and crossed out. One looks at the activities of young poets following in the wake of the most entrepreneurial group among recent American poets of the innovation-cadre and notes that some of them seem anxious to articulate or maybe accrue a group or generational identity of their own. Put those cartons right there, Bubba! It's clear they've learned from their predecessors this much: "the future is up for grabs (and in some cases the past as well). Unsecured area is being fought over: reviewers, critics, readers, students, professors, publishers, owners of book stores not to mention the writer's own practice." Something's a little funky at some of the parties lately. Not to mention the writer's own practice, it seems that as today's younger poets buzz out of a swarm of gnats the institutional apparatus that assisted their elders changes shape or disappears.

In one of his recent books Anselm Hollo writes:

> "poems in 2091
> objects of monkish interest"
> sez Vidal
> Gore, not Pierre

and one wonders how many poets under 35 will get the joke when few are obliged to read Pound in the universities anymore and few beyond the universities would bother or have any other way to find Vidal (Pierre) in the original or translation. They'll know that Vidal (Gore) is

supposed to be boorish and obtuse and self-importantly famous and maybe they'll nod when Hollo cuts in an addendum that doesn't so much refute Vidal (Gore) as position him: "like poor but civilized urban existence/ another thing of the past." Unlikely, though, that they'll roam as widely as Hollo in the languages of lyric. Between anger and resignation, much of Hollo is, reflecting just a little of the sentiment, more European than American, that thinks it remembers things once were otherwise with regard to the poor and "civilization." An occasional nostalgia, pushed back down when it pokes its head up, is partly product of the lingering attraction to poetries of the past, some of which—the skaldic and folk remnants especially—enter into Hollo's work as he rummages among the traditions of the historical avant-gardes.

The poetry of New York School pasts looms large for some of the younger poets I've found in the last few years—not all of them of course. It might be argued that the language poets—with exceptions—underplayed their debt to some of these same poets, or exaggerated their distance from them, and several younger poets have decided to go back and have another look, which is natural enough. But the poetry of Ted Berrigan, John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, Barbara Guest, Bernadette Mayer and others who now are of considerable and new interest to a younger generation, however permutational or dispersed its methods of composition, whatever its idiosyncrasies of self-consciousness, can sometimes be inhabited rather like Crocodile Dundee put on an alligator skin in a movie I watched for five minutes last night. It's an affect, a language or technique of persona one recognizes, very much compiled from lyric tradition, alert and effusive, discursive in every nook and cranny of the urban if not always urbane, a poetry that today as it is taken up as a mode to extend might be too certain of the political and cultural values of its possible and much desired audience, even chummy—there's lots of names! Still, it's hard not to be entertained by it anyway, this new poetry beyond contestation, content to tweak the personal and the ordinary with soft irony, mockery, and playfulness. (You'd like me to use names here, cruel reader?). Hard not to like it and only partly because we like its models. Here as elsewhere versions of a more familiar discursive self come back into exploratory poetry, sixth generation modernism tries to beat its more bluntly and naively nostalgic rivals over at the workshop hands down. Few of the poets seem to want to wrestle with theory, much less something approaching synthetic vision, because that's all over and who can blame them as it seems they're right. Desperate efforts to write a new "poetics" seem equally familiar; we really must be at the end of something, exhausted millennial wheeze. I suppose that some—Will Alexander for

instance—at least try to stir up the pot. Mostly I'm left to wonder: the crocodile is skinned so that one can hide under water looking like a crocodile? The avant-garde is dead. Long live the avant-garde.

I don't know what that means either. I'd sat down to write something on two recent books by Anselm Hollo, thinking that here was a poet who was known to some and deserved to be known to more, known to have been an influential teacher of poets as well as a prolific writer and translator, someone whose work might be engaged by these same people looking down behind the imperial langpo (emperors of one corner of the left pocket). I'd checked the indexes of useful studies of recent American poetry authored by Jed Rasula, Hank Lazer, Robert von Hallberg, Majorie Perloff, Joseph Conte, Alan Golding, and a few others. Hollo's nowhere to be found. At the same time the British critic Clive Bush, in his huge new book on 5 poets of the British Poetry Revival, speaks of him as "famous": it's possible that Hollo has fallen into a between-space that has hurt the visibility of specific transatlantic poets if not among poets than in critical worlds organized under the sign of nation. Robert Grenier reviewed an earlier book in this magazine and there's been other recognition but Hollo's floating no tenure boats; he's yet to get his author' s page at the EPC; he's mostly slipped off the reading lists if he was ever on them. Bob Perelman, quoted above, mentions him once in his book on language poetry while working to distinguish langpo from Ted Berrigan's work, which years earlier Charles Bernstein had worked equally hard to read from within langpo's critique of the "psychological I."

If it's the case that we're to read Berrigan and others again, if anybody looks again at what one fears may soon be called the prehistory of language writing, sorting out divergent paths taken and others ignored, Hollo will be there waiting for them, the "skaldic throwbacks" and the Greek Anthology under the New York everyday, the pop collage open to humane wit and chastened desire and prone to veer off toward melancholy or sentiment now and again . It's a capacious work in its stops and starts, never far from lyric's praise or blame, often rhetorically and even occasionally-based however elliptical the verse's movement. It's a repository of a fair number of the century's "experimental" procedures as well. Wit and the melancholy and sentiment that shadow it, a poetry unafraid of proposition or, at times, the rhythms of closure, brilliant in the phrase and phrasal rhythms. More arresting in the phrase and movement between phrases, perhaps, than in the totality of the poems or sequences of poems (there are exceptions). Thirty-plus books and beyond them volumes of translations. Hollo offers the phrase "minor poet" an honorific resonance or reveals it to be altogether meaningless now. I can't imagine another poet who

would open an elegy for his sister with "morning sun/ strikes me pow! in the face" and the detail of waking in bed staring at the wall of his cat's black fur. Quirky. Ravens and black cats too.

Looking at Hollo's most recent two books, *Corvus* [Coffee House, 1995] and *AHOE (And How On Earth)* [Smokeproof Press, 1997], I'm guessing that Hollo is way beyond caring much about widespread public acclaim, even if I'm correct in thinking that there is much about his work that might be grasped by publics beyond, say, *Sulfur*'s. An author's note tells us that "Both raven and corvus derive from the Indo-European root *ker,* 'to cry out.'" Beginning with the elegy for his sister the book's all over the place in its lyrics and sequences and its fine overdrafts working the Greek Anthology, waiting for reviewers at its midpoint with an impish smile as a sequence opens with "after reading the tiresome review/ from the school of tedious outpourings/the man of letters is writing/ 'wouldn't we all be happier in the factory?'" One sequence takes up Bosnia, others are there among famous friends alive or, too often, dead–"when you met him he was a man/now he is a postage stamp." Self-deprecation and the speed of the verse on its feet keep the near-banalities ("life's just a dream remember/poetry just an interruption/of the great conversation/farewell notes from those gone/ weave through the conversation") from lingering too long in lachrymose regions ("as you enter the recording studio/you notice you don't have anything to record"). Maybe the best of *Corvus* is the overdrafts from the Greek Anthology. If Hollo is ready for reviewers, Hollo's Lucilius knows all about poets who write too much: "the poet Eutykhides has died–/watch out, you dwellers of the underworld!/here comes Eutykides with his Odes!/it was his last wish/to be buried/with twenty-five trunks of *text!*"

For me the smaller book *AHOE* is more consistently alert and nimble, beginning with "Turn Off the News":

> anxiety gallops through chatter
> fading century's martial insanities
> brain struggles to sum up "shut up"
> articulation fails
> walking shadow slides across faces
>
> dusk over epitaphs
> ash hair rusty litanies
>
> dead friends and rain
>
> paradise is an idiot

bones vines cold day

old vulture in airlock

scorpion dust
sneeze

Dusk to dust, and the ending here is perfect, refusing the sentiment other poems sometimes overindulge as the poem backs away from the lively exasperation of "paradise is an idiot." Elsewhere a little poem for Erik Satie and much else, often a pessimism forlornly naming "hopeless desire/ for a new brain/ for the species" while poking at a humanist optimism Hollo is not altogether prepared to abandon. All the poems are glossed at book's end; Hollo is user-friendly.

Hollo's work is mostly floated–factured, Allen Fisher would say–in the emotional vapors of an anarchistic, improvisational self. Discussing Bosnia and much else it knows "what's wrong with them/ **no doubt**"–that is, insufficient doubt's the problem, the "them" covering just about any self-important dogmatist and sometimes with a nonspecific urgency. While the poems combine signature voice-effects and suspicion of a presumptuous ego–we suspect that we'd like this man projected by the poems–there's also an old style anarchist individualism which hopes that, freed of massive social bullshit, the human animal will show up on the screens as fundamentally passionate and good. (Behind me Nick Cave sings "People just ain't no good," which is almost the same thing, and again I feel better for a few minutes.) That's the humanism of the work under Hollo's skepticism and pessimism. Most philosophers will tell you that it's against a background certainty that skepticism shows up, I'm not trying to score points here; the success or failure of this poetry will have nothing to do, as Wittgenstein might say, with the speculative intellect but rather with the hopefulness permeating it even as hope is sometimes vented in despair or resignation or anger. Richard Rorty: "'Humanism' can mean a certain Platonic-Cartesian-Kantian account of what it is to be human. But it can also mean. . .participation in the hopes of the Enlightenment–and specifically the hope that human beings, once they have set God and the various surrogates for God to one side, may learn to rely on their own romantic imagination, and their own ability to cooperate with each other for the common good." For Hollo it would mean both I think.

There's talk in the margins of one of the books about our times being neo-feudal–a claim one hears now and again but one I never really understand. I take it that such claims come down to wailing about

the brutality and continuing tyrannies of our moment, but how we should even be able to recognize the medieval is lost on me. If we're "neo-feudal" we can't use the word in critique. "People will live under an absolute, palpable tyranny without being able to say they are not free," Wittgenstein wrote, and everything about the manner of Hollo's own *expression* belies the claim that tyrannies of thought and institution altogether hold us. Or that's the wager on freedom that keeps his mind jumping, though the fear is that, when it comes to poetry, our freedom begins to look like that of practiced circus masters. The fear is that poetry is abundant and nearly obsolete.

—KEITH TUMA

Noticings

Boundaries are fictive, like words. They can enliven or deaden perception. If they grow sclerotic, they are a symptom of dogma. When boundaries blend, it is a sign of disequilibrium, healthy uncertainty, a spiritual truth harmonizing with a material substance or rejection of a facile convention for the possibilities inherent in indeterminate meanings, the generative tumult of free association and created observation. Systole of form enlarged by the diastole of spirit. Il cuore: *the heart/ Selected Poems 1970-1995* (Wesleyan University Press, 1997) by Kathleen Fraser, chronicles a search for an aesthetic disencumbered by habitual linguistic forms, language constructions that relax the authority of forms or criterion Fraser terms "bullying." "The primacy of embroidered meanings," a phrase plucked from "boundayr," a poem in 1987's *Notes preceding trust* included in this volume, might serve as a catch phrase for this approach. Fraser's poetry is rich in polysemous implication, and "primacy of embroidered meaning" might be taken—as one possible fold—to suggest a displacement of subject matter, the development of an open field capable of multiple association, a disruption of logocentric dominion in order to create a space in which the subject is never neatly posed but always in perspective. In her essay on Kathleen Fraser in *Contemporary Literature,* Linda Taylor articulates this impulse as a nurturing dynamic in which "our habits of perception are further defamiliarized by the intangibility of a subject

(or subjects) moving among an array of colors used to create verbal canvases in which the words themselves float unattached to referential objects yet evoke strong emotional and psychological moments and nuances." Taylor further emphasizes this as a distinctly feminine approach. Fraser would probably agree. In her essay "Traditions of Marginality," which appeared in the women's magazine *Frontiers* in the late eighties, Fraser discusses her early frustrations with conventional models and her fascination with the innovative works of modernist women writers. "I recognized a structural order of fragmentation and resistance to the patriarchal models that confirmed my perspective," she writes. "I wanted this difference in my own work. Yet, ironically, this fascination with the innovative works of modernist women writers marginalized me even further from the official women's writing community." I must confess issues of gender provoke and confuse me. Marginality is certainly not just a problem for women writers. It is—undeniably—experienced more acutely than it is for male writers. Women have been grossly underrepresented in all the arts and European culture has traditionally favored the careers of men. But marginality in contemporary language arts is far more apt to be the result of a certain aesthetic rather than gender. The resistance to moralizing and ideological models of conventional writing, to mimetic representation and narrative omniscience, the desire to rupture the inertia of language habits and liberate the subject from the stifling logic of narrative causality is not a uniquely feminine phenomenon. Taylor identifies a body of language strategies in Fraser's work as being tied particularly to a "female experience with language" ("a feminine jouissance of fluidity and multiplicity, that is halted and broken into noncontiguous words, so that the gaps between words are important to consider") all of which I find very puzzling and very intriguing. How does this differ from the work of Larry Eigner, Joseph Ceravalo, and P. Inman? How does gender inform the work of Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein? *(Omissions Are Not Accidents, Gender in the Art of Marianne Moore* by Jeanne Heuving provides an illuminating discussion of some of these issues). However. I don't want to get bogged down in gender. What appeals to me most about Fraser's work is her prose writing. Her essays, letters and prose poems have a confidence, clarity, and generosity of spirit that is deeply pleasurable. Fraser can be keenly sensuous; she is a writer who mixes luxury with austerity, restraint with elegance. Hers is a sensibility much like free-style Ikebana, the art of Japanese flower arrangement (the samurai were chief among its early practitioners) an art form attentive to living material and discipline of the inner spirit, purification of mind and heart ("it is only fools who like regularity; what is imperfect is best"). Fraser's later poetry, *as when*

new time folds up, from 1993, is scrupulously problematic. The lines often feel tentative—"as if the bridge had formed, half way over/ a scar in air"—and frequently turn cryptic, "anodic slate light," "opponent rubied flower bend," like fragments of an Etruscan jar discovered in an Umbrian cellar. Taylor's "feminine jouissance of fluidity" thrills through much of the work ("red and black brushed with finger/ into soft stone recess") though her linguistic disquiet is more apt to provoke startling quirks of verbal behavior—bodies of living metaphor—to emerge, halting and strange, from the Etruscan obscurity: "tomb hum/ where more than one dancer/ lifts a muscular red thigh/ or rests."

Reading Rochelle Owens is like riding a Harley-Davidson: a savage intellect rumbles in the words like frenzied pistons. *Rochelle Owens/ New and Selected Poems (1961-1996),* Junction Press, 1997, (how appropriate that the photograph on the cover shows her adjusting a high collar on a black leather coat) is a strange brew. "Indeterminacy of syntax" is a gross understatement. Beginning with the early work Owens' syntax is aggressively charged and highly compressed, "honey & dung hidden burnt a form filtering/ through the wall/ soaking through the guiltless lederhosen." The interrelational density of her words, the supercharged hyperverbalism of her style is consistent throughout. "O it's going to be/ murder at Christmastime for me," Owens declaims in a fragment from 1988's *How Much Paint Does the Painting Need,* "my blood pressure/ dropped to a dangerous level/ eyelids of black glass/ wanting to tango." Owens' entire oeuvre is a tango with the auditor/ reader. It is violent and dangerous. Edgy and bloody. Wild. What amazes me is the utter lack of *melopoeia*, the absence of musical phrasing. The words are tough, sharp, jagged. Raw and impudent, dripping blue fire. "bulging/ six Urges!" ". . .& 8 darknesses/ burn & chant!" It is not surprising Rochelle Owens is also a playwright and video artist. There is an aura of spectacle about her poetry, Catherine wheels and Roman candles fountaining sparks and dragons. Her poems seethe, boil, thrash and lunge. Were I an actor auditioning for a role as a prophet, I might want to choose a piece from *Elga's Incantation* to declaim. "YES GOD PUT A BODY ON COME ON BACK & RISE WHILE I'M IN THE FLAESH LIKE YOU YES & IT MUSH BE THAT'S RIGHT MUST BE WRITTIN OF THE LAW MOSES MUST BE FULFILLED MUZIC & DAVID WAS A O FOOL & SLOW OF HEART & GOD WANTED THINGS DONE & THEY FELL DOWN & HE ROSE LIKE A PROVERB SO NOBODY PLAYS MUZIC IN AMOS' HOUSE."

"Then she says, a penis is needed, female/ artists almost always can use one" Anna Rabinowitz writes in her recent collection of poetry *At the Site of Inside Out* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1997). I wonder what Linda Taylor would make of that. The penis is a conceit

for male power. "Hartley sculpting/ skies out of granite." The true subject of the poem is the painter Georgia O'Keeffe, "warm vaginas, moisture of vulvas, furtive/ stand-ins, meanings plain as your face: a woman/ minus penis making art with her body,/ trapped in her body." The last line here surprised me; I had anticipated a cathartic release, something orgasmic. An affirmation of the power of the female anima rather than an agitated proposal for O'Keeffe's phallically challenged, "desiccated" body. Be that as it may, it's an exciting poem (reprinted in *Best American Poetry 1989)* solid and intuitional. Rabinowitz is an eminently accessible and lucid poet. Her phrasing is supple and straightforward. She is rarely given to syntactical disruption and semantic dissonance. Her strength is in her rhythm and her ability to wed sound to sense. Concreteness, particularity, sensuous shape. "...an oak table teetering of its own weight," "shadow cast on cursory/ filaments of grass by the pointed roof/ of the house." Rabinowitz loves to play with form. There are several sestinas in this collection that are especially adept at masking the end-words in lines of spry agility, an abecedarian acrostic ("Ars Poetica," and a quirkily repetitive four-part piece ("The Foreplay of Hermeneutics") which adapts the repetons and interlocking rhyme scheme of the pantoum to what may be Rabinowitz's own invention (at least I can't find its counterpart in *The New Book of Forms).* "Fragile Dialectics," a highly discrete and percipient piece about two old men playing chess in a swimming pool, reads with a graceful sureness, king's bishop to queen's bishop four.

In an essay written in 1965 ("Poems Are A Complex") which I continue to read, occasionally, for its resonance and reassurance, Robert Creeley remarks that "words are *things* too. Poems gave me access to this fact more than any other possibility in language." Laynie Browne's collection of prose poems, *Rebecca Letters,* Kelsey St. Press, 1997) substantiates this claim with lyrical ingenuity. Her lines are exquisitely balanced, like the heft of a finely made knife or pruning saw. Each is intensely metaphorical, "the relation between betweens." Nothing is static; everything is in a state of becoming, transformation. Everything stirs with potential new meaning and fresh association. Words murmur a music of spine and scented resin. Their aggressive approach to linguistic play and totemic vision offer a genuine mechanism for the dilation of the pupils. They do more than excite interest they "twist the meaning of season" and "twirl around their roots." These "letters" (letters penned to a phantom ancestor) are intensely private and were it not for the focus on linguistic texture and daring twists of meaning would risk sinking into a solipsistic mire. Browne enters into a play with language that invites an equally playful and imaginative reading. The overt lyricism, the unabashed attention to

aesthetic, avoids affectation by a sustained effort at liberating her words rather than saturating them with impregnations of solferino angst. It is the liveliness of Browne's lyric invention that keeps everything afloat. "The water interplay between resolution, and the float which sustains positive drift."

—JOHN OLSON

Negative Definitions: Talk for the SubVoicive Colloquium, London, 1997

"Linguistically innovative poetry" as a term had humble origins in a March 1988 issue of the British magazine *Pages*. Not then dignified by capital letters into proper nounhood, it was Gilbert Adair's way of describing the kinds of British poetry we believed had been "operating since 1977" in "fragmentation and incoherence." The result had been a "public invisibility of the poetry" and "ditto of a theorizing discourse" in Adair's words. Its definition is not to be found in the terms of its name; the argument that all good poetry is linguistically innovative doesn't invalidate its particularity, but suggests that its meaning is its use. If anything it is a term to magnetically constellate certain practices. Yet it has been used recently to speak of British Poetry Revival work as well as American language poetry in a way well beyond Adair's use: a buzzword for a fuzzy set of poets outside his temporal and cultural determinants. I want here to attempt not what I hoped I'd be able to attempt at this stage, an outline of the *positivities* of such recent (and now not so recent) British work which Gilbert complained I was *not* addressing 9 years ago. I want to begin to define this term (which I'd gladly drop like Wittgenstein's ladder, not because it has no further use, but because it has been put to unhelpful uses) rather negatively. The differentials I wish to draw, firstly, with the British Poetry Revival are paradoxically the most contentious, yet the least revealing; secondly, the differential with North American language poetry is more obvious but more illuminating.

The conditions Adair identified as the post 1977 condition of the poetry—e.g. "decreasing publishing opportunities; wide gaps in continuations of public . . .discussions; a one-way 'dialogue' with opposi-

tions that largely expunge us, . . .movement in a less visible, less real poetic community"—contrasts with Eric Mottram's celebratory survey (note the dates) "The British Poetry Revival 1960-1975," which catalogues reputations, achievements and opportunities. (See Hampson and Barry *The New British Poetries.)* Yet this carries an appendix, dated 1978, which makes sorry reading: the story (again!) of the end of the Poetry Society Era (and the demise of *Poetry Review* and *Poetry Information).* This was the "fragmented and incoherent" backdrop to the despair of the early 1980s, one echoed by Allen Fisher's identification in his 1985 introduction to his *Necessary Business* essay of those wound-licking years as "a period of entrenchment and awe . . .speaking in a considerably small room" (Spanner 25, p. 163). A small room, it is worth reminding ourselves, that Thatcher was crusading to empower somebody to buy. A bumbling 70s social democracy had been replaced by an ideology that wanted to change human consciousness, and nearly succeeded, "a culture fascinated with change, ruthless curtailment of job reliabilities, share-owning, and the legitimating *professionalism,"* as Adair put it in language which is only just (and arguably) a period piece, post 1997!

The most positive aspects of *Necessary Business* I've outlined elsewhere with an "awe" of my own: the attempt to articulate a poetics, drawn from three already active writers, which we might see as a poetry of a new pertinence that shifted the poetics from the Revival interest in Olson to activating readers through habit-breaking unpredictability and plurivocal structures. I believe that Fisher's essay should have been better known, and I still see it as the paradigm shift it was intended to be. But the moment has gone.

The increasing willingness of poets to operate theoretically, in terms of post-structuralist and other theory, to even expound poetics more coherently was a change that seems not yet historical enough to comment upon (but magazines like *Fragmente* and *Parataxis*, and earlier, *Reality Studios*, had promoted the "public discussion" of which Adair lamented the absence). The result of this may have been the willingness to work in terms of conceptualized projects, whether Fisher's *Gravity*, Clarke's "Trio," or Adair's *Jizz Rim.*

My unwillingness to name names here, to deal with lists of in/ex/clusions does not just derive from restrictions of space, but from an awareness that many British poets, like Fisher himself, belong to both "moments," that active poetic careers stretch decades, as Mottram noted of his 70s Revivalists: "poets in their twenties or early thirties (have) their careers largely ahead of them." Many excellent poets, like Bill Griffiths, do not fit the schema well at all. Neither should my insistence upon differentials be taken as a denial of continuities. I'm

willing to concede that my differentials may come to little more than a ruthlessly circumscribed "scene," and a rising interest in theory and poetics, but even that is bound to be of significance, as are, of course, revisionist readings of that Revival.

The differential with language (or language-oriented or -centered) poetry seems more obvious because "linguistically innovative poetry" could be a synonym for those terms; in its weakest formulation it could be little more than a sprig of Americana which could never be grafted on British soil (the official view of much of the Revival work, remember). More positively, like Bruce Andrews in his introduction to *Floating Capital,* "Transatlantic," demands we should forget national differences and speak of "this more inclusive field of so-called English language writing," which evidence the "same *barriers* being dismantled." *(Paradise & Method* 247) Much that follows is speculative, and an attempt to show a corner of that inclusive field that will be forever British!

Several commentators (including Barrett Watten at the New Hampshire conference, *Assembling the Alternatives)* have remarked the influence of the Vietnam War on the post-68 generation of the Post-War baby boom language poets. Questions of "ideology, discourse, social rules, & epistemological paradigms or opacity or 'sense'" raised by Bruce Andrews' academic work on US foreign policy naturally found a place in his poetic practice. *(P & M* 79) Protest at this War had been present in British Poetry Revival work, of course, but the 1980s in Thatcherite Britain was a very different situation with different answers to the same questions. The F 1-11s were taking off to defend the council house they had sold you. A foreign policy dominated by manufactured wars and by a frantic last minute cold war before the Wall fell, was combined at least with a politicized, antinuclear official opposition in Parliament. To be engaged in Leftist politics in Britain in the 1980s was not the act of despair it would have been in 1970s America. The enemy and the evil was identifiable in all its absurd manifestations: "colorless nation/sucking on grief/a handbag/strutting between uniforms/such slow false tears/. . .the state as/the status/quo/ . . ./while the homeless stare/at nightlong lights/in empty offices" (Tom Raworth, *Tottering State,* 214).

Language poetry seems opposed, if not in fact, then by stance, to such empiricist strands in US Poetry as the work of Williams and the Objectivists. No such Oedipal hold can swerve the British writers, and a strong, often Situationist-derived, sense of the *everyday* invades British poetry, as in the Raworth quote, as in Fisher, as in cris cheek, whose work is often a translation of the real: "a primacy/of sight/in

blinkered/place culture" (*Talus* 5/6, 128). The great exception is Ron Silliman in works such as *Tjanting*.

Early language poetry theory (before about 1982) was necessarily very strict to keep the object of its attention clear. Reading the 1970s pieces in Andrews' *Paradise & Method* its structuralist model of language seems almost nostalgic. His three part argument contrasts a mainstream aesthetic of linguistic transparency with the structuralist analytic of opacity and difference, and extends this theoretically to a *"third* paradigm" (26) in which the linguistic system is worked over to produce "a political writing practice" that avoids complete opacity, "that unveils or demystifies the creation & sharing of meaning. . .to stress (words') use value & productivity in the face of mechanisms of social control" (19). While British writers have at times developed a similar straw man Mainstream Poet, few have seen themselves operating exclusively in the area between the signifier and signified, to produce sense while defying reference (to borrow a distinction of Ricoeur's). Perhaps, and I am by no means sure about this, there is some value precisely in a distinction between language-centered, as a mode of poetic investigation inside the sign, and linguistic innovation, as a mode of experimentation between the signifier and its referent, one which better reflects British work.

Indeed, this seems the direction language theory developed, itself. By 1987, Barrett Watten in "Social Formalism" (*North Dakota Quarterly*, Fall 1987), was arguing that Andrews' linguistics were archaically "scientific" and "objective," and that a social dimension to the linguistic theory, the notion of language as a social semiotic, as it were, was lacking. (I don't share this view, but let it stand as a critique of Andrews' *early* poetics, which he constantly revised and socialized.) Watten plumps for Bourdieu as a model for language's socially communicative gameness. (See "Poetic Sequencing and the New," *Net-/knotwork(s),* Ship of Fools, for my take on this.)

Bourdieu stands here as an analog for Theory in the 1980s, to indicate that by the time British poets were developing linguistically innovative poetry, they were responding directly (and indirectly) to a range of continental theories not available to the Americans in the 1970s: a vast, sorted, body of knowledge, ranging from Bourdieu's sociology to Lyotard's delineations of the postmodern to Deleuze and Guattari's proliferating machines (and, more recently, on to Derrida's turning towards ethics)—all beyond the structuralist beginnings. The poets also had the works of the Americans: *The Language Book* and essay collections by Watten and Bernstein.

Adair referred to both Fisher *and* Guattari to develop a view of linguistic innovation as social experimentation, intervention in concepts of value: "Allen Fisher calls attention to art as 'necessary business'—posing absolute challenges to the essential separation between 'exchange value, use value and desire value' (Guattari)./Cutting across formations categorized as discrete, 'discontinuity' *is* so only if it makes *other* relations; or else it is mimesis of actual informational chaos." This parallels Andrews' desire for a third paradigm, but posits new continuities in social (informational) terms (remember the delineations of Thatcherism in Adair's piece), and in terms of techniques of radical artifice, as Marjorie Perloff would put it, of creative linkage, and not in terms of the by then tarnished "linguistic analogy."

(Doubts about Andrews' early *poetics* are not doubts about his poetry, or the later socially oriented poetics. Poetics are a permission, not a description, a strange self-involved discourse. Work should not be judged on its conformity to poetics, or vice versa, nor on any "unity" thereby achieved. Indeed Adair's Deleuzoguattarian assertion that Andrews' work "apes but contests the shit-machine" remains a powerful description, one which implicitly proves much I'm saying here. *(Reality Studios* 10, 108))

Without outlining in detail the convergences and divergences of the British Veronica Forrest-Thomson's *Poetic Artifice* (1978) and American Charles Bernstein's "The Artifice of Absorption" (1986) (in (1992)), it is clear that language poetry itself moved towards a more open notion of artifice as "devicehood." Some opacity could be used for antiabsorptive means, and some for absorptive purposes. Here the straw man version of The Mainstream is given a third dimension. This is an approximation to Forrest-Thomson's notion of "naturalization," which she defines as "an attempt to reduce the strangeness of poetic language and poetic organization by making it intelligible, by translating it into a statement about the nonverbal external world, by making the Artifice appear natural" (xi) This concept is active in some British discussions of poetic language. If "good naturalization" dwells on the levels of Artifice, it holds open the way for this disruptive work between the signifier and the referent (or wherever it is located), for the new continuities Adair called for, for creative linkage, in work of more radically artificial structures than Forrest-Thomson herself countenanced, and in work different in orientation from language poetry.

To come up to date, and to quote from my *PN Review* account of the New Hampshire conference (the papers are not yet published in book form), Barrett Watten attempted to set a new agenda for American writing, an "historicist delineation of language poetry as a situated post-1968, post-Vietnam, discourse that now faced new challenges and

the need to change, not into an easy intelligibility, but into a mode of negotiation for the text as social, and the invasion of the text by a wide range of materials, to engender productive encounters with the world—including history which American poets have largely turned their backs on in a reaction, I have always thought, against Olson and Dorn. This plea had an odd ring to British... ears; with a poet of the distinction of Allen Fisher at the conference we didn't need to look far for a poet who could influence the Americans."

The thought of influencing the Americans is an interesting one, one raised at the conference itself by Keith Tuma. It strengthens, by reversal, the case for differentials here, my sense of a poetry with characteristics of its own. But any invasion of the text by new materials must heed the words of Bernstein in his 1990 formulation: "Content is more an attitude toward the work *or* toward language *or* toward the *materials* of the poem than some kind of subject that is in any way detachable from the handling of the *materials*." *(AP 8;* my emphases).

The insistences of those *or*s, the repetition of the word "materials," suggest where formally *and* linguistically innovative poetries world-wide might be going.

—ROBERT SHEPPARD

Errata, Sulfur #41: we regret that in Barbara Guest's poem, "Rocks on a Platter," pages 84 and 85 were mistakenly printed with two versions from the same stanza, and that on one of the pages "implacable poet" was added. These words should have appeared on another page.

FUTURE SULFURS

Sulfur was founded in 1981 at the California Institute of Technology; after 17 years, and 42 issues, I have decided that it would be appropriate to end the magazine in the spring of 2000. The schedule for the remaining issues is as follows:

Sulfur #43: regular issue, Fall 1998.

Sulfur #44 : special issue guest-edited by Jenny Penberthy and Marjorie Perloff on "The Pacific Rim," Spring 1999. Any contributions for this issue should be sent directly to Jenny or Marjorie at the following addresses by November, 1998:

Jenny Penberthy
3125 Waterloo St.
Vancouver
BC V6R 358

Marjorie Perloff
1467 Amalfi Drive
Pacific Palisades
CA 90272

There will be no Fall 1999 issue of the magazine.

Sulfur #45/46: a special issue consisting of brief contributions from past contributors to Sulfur. No non-solicited material will be considered for this final issue.

Since Sulfur #43 will be the last regular issue, *all submissions received after July 1, 1998, will be returned unread.*

Most back issues are still available (with the exception of #22, available only with complete sets) *at $7 each.* There are very few copies available of some of these issues.

—CE, March 1998

SULFUR must be the most important literary magazine which has explored and extended the boundaries of poetry. Clayton Eshleman has a nose for smelling out what was going to happen next in the ceaseless evolution of the living art.
–James Laughlin, New Directions Books

In an era of literary conservatism and sectarianism, the broad commitment of SULFUR to both literary excellence and a broad, interdisciplinary, unbought humanistic engagement with the art of poetry in America has been invaluable. To my notion, its critical articles and notes have been the sharpest going over the last several years.
–Gary Snyder

Founded at the California Institute of Technology in 1981, SULFUR is now based at Eastern Michigan University. In book format, it appears biannually, and averages 224 pages per issue and includes poetry and prose by established and experimental post WWII writers, as well as young and unknown ones, in a context that also includes archival materials (Pound, Williams, Hart Crane, Artaud), translations, artwork, essays and a 50 page section of reviews and noticings.

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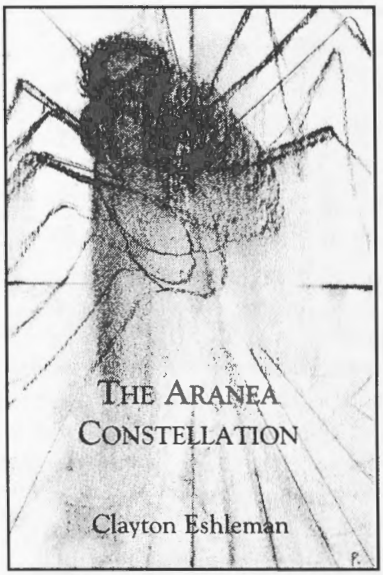

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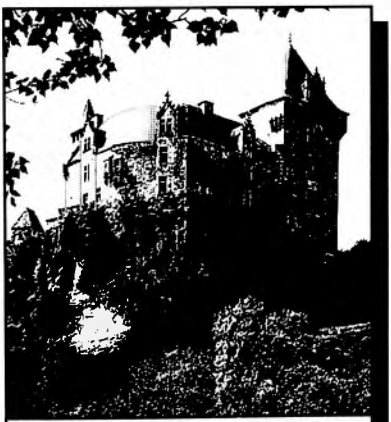

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